

Iraq slams U.S. report on 'war crimes'

BAGHDAD (Agencies) — Iraq said Sunday a U.S. government report listing what Washington called substantiated Iraqi "war crimes" in Kuwait was full of lies and fabrications.

Al Thawra, the newspaper of the ruling Baath Party, described the report released on Friday as an attempt by the United States to fabricate evidence against Iraq as the time approached to review an international trade embargo against it.

The U.N. Security Council will conduct its periodic review of the sanctions on March 29.

"The report is full of distortion and falsehood," Al Thawra said. Iraq invaded Kuwait in August 1990 and was driven out by a U.S.-led multinational force seven months later.

The 116-page report contains written and videotaped accounts from rape and torture victims, photographs of murdered Kuwaitis and videotapes of torture implements and burial sites.

Kuwait probe

Kuwaiti navy and air force officers will be asked to appear before a parliamentary fact-finding committee studying the crisis with Iraq that preceded the 1990

invasion, newspapers reported Sunday.

Parliament's Deputy Speaker Saleh Al Fadalah was quoted as saying the panel wanted to question senior officers from the two services, as well as an assistant chief of staff for military intelligence and a former Kuwaiti military attaché in Baghdad.

Mr. Fadalah did not identify the officers and officials.

Iraqi troops met little resistance from Kuwait's vastly outnumbered armed forces when they swept into their neighbour on Aug. 2, 1990. A U.S.-led coalition of Western and Arab armies expelled Iraqi occupation forces seven months later.

The committee has the power to turn itself into a full-blown inquiry with the authority to compel witnesses to attend.

But Mr. Fadalah said the 17 hearings so far held by the committee had gone smoothly and there had been no need for the extra powers.

"All are cooperating with us in a fine way," the English-language Arab Times quoted him as saying.

The committee in the past week questioned army Chief of Staff Major General Jaber Al

Khaled Al Sabah for three hours on the army's actions shortly before the invasion.

Mr. Fadalah said the committee also planned to question ordinary citizens and expatriates about their experiences during the invasion period.

The committee is expected to submit an initial report on its work to the assembly on April 8. Mr. Fadalah has said it would take more than a year to submit a final report.

Sheikh Nawaf told the committee in January that Kuwait had been deceived by Iraq into thinking that it would not invade. The armed forces were consequently not prepared when it happened, he said.

Iraq completes canal

Iraq has finished work on a canal to divert more of the Euphrates River from the southern swamps where the government wants to flush out Shiite Muslim rebels.

The state-run Iraqi News Agency said Saturday the 135-kilometre canal will tap the Euphrates near the southern town of Qadisiyah and channel water to Sulaybat in the western desert

region of Dhi Qar.

Last year Iraq finished two large drainage projects and started work on a third.

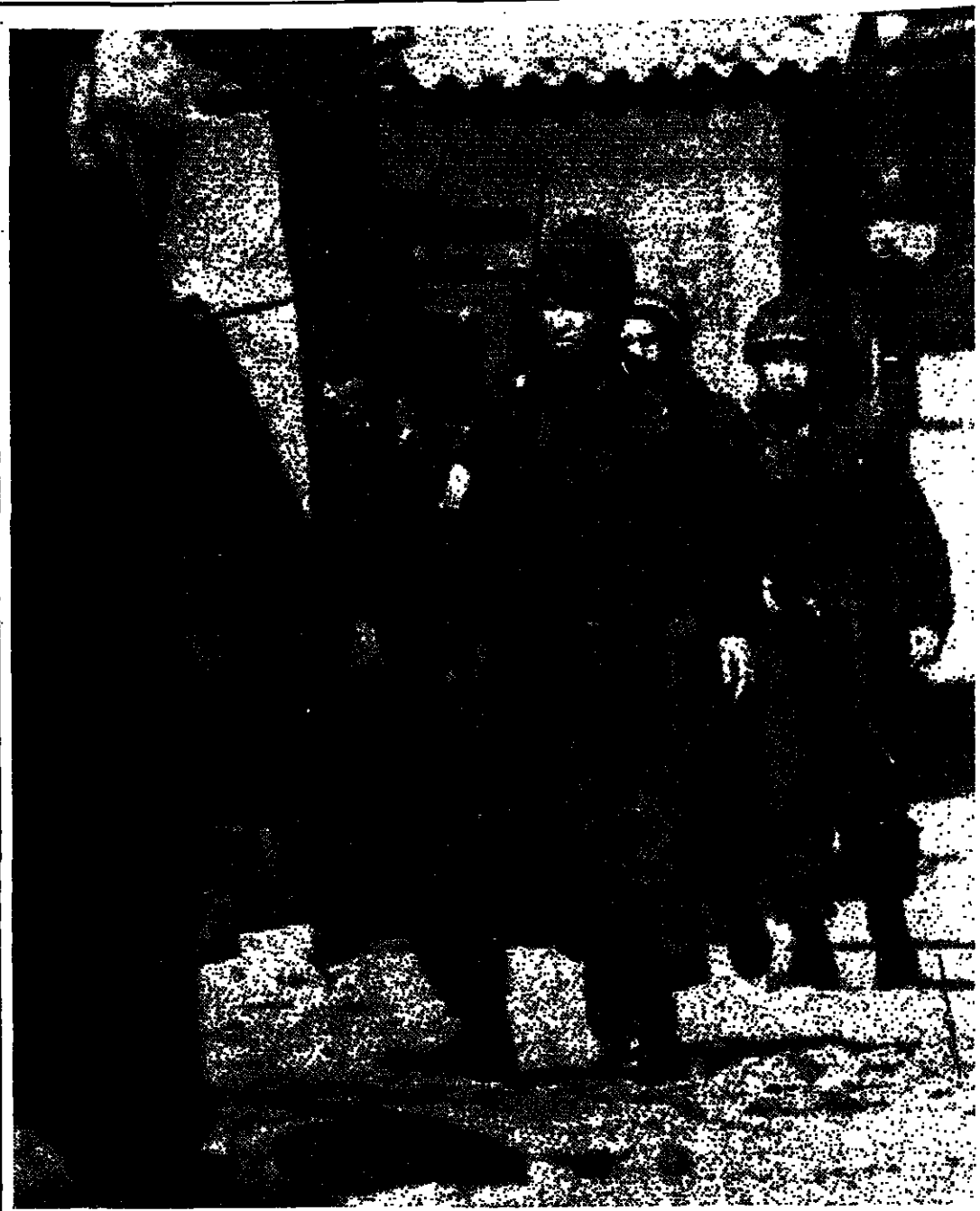
The government says the canals are for irrigation, designed to carry high-saline agricultural runoff and flush it into the Gulf, thereby reducing salinity over the years.

But diverting the Tigris and Euphrates rivers is drying up vast tracts of reed-choked marshlands and forcing tens of thousands of Shiites from their centuries-old homes.

Rebels based in Iran claim that about 50,000 native march Arabs live in the swamps and that about 200,000 Shiite Muslim refugees have been sheltering there since their failed rebellion against Baghdad in March 1991.

They say the marshes are being drained to flush out the refugees and about 10,000 armed Shiite rebels.

Oil industry analysts say huge oil fields, capable of producing up to 2.3 million barrels of oil a day, lie beneath the swamps. Military operations waged against the marshlands are believed aimed at gaining control over the oil in addition to destroying the rebels' sanctuary.



Israeli soldiers search the Jabalya refugee camp in the occupied Gaza Strip (AFP photo)

Arafat urges protection for Palestinians

TUNIS (AP) — Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) Chairman Yasser Arafat expressed hopes Saturday that Palestinian participation in peace talks could be resolved before the scheduled opening of the new round of talks April 20 in Washington.

Mr. Arafat also called for "urgent" action by the international community to assure the protection of Palestinians in the Israeli-occupied territories, saying they were being subjected to "a veritable butchery."

He said he would soon go to Cairo for a visit with President Hosni Mubarak, who is himself planning a tour of European countries and a visit to the United States, apparently to discuss the peace process.

"We want to go to Washington. We don't practice rupture for the sake of rupture," Mr. Arafat said at a news conference at his residence.

But he said there could be no Palestinian participation in the peace process as long as the issue of Israeli-occupied Palestinian remains unresolved and as long as discussions over the status of Jerusalem "do not figure high in the negotiating calendar."

"I hope this question will be resolved before April 20," Mr. Arafat said.

Some 400 Palestinians banished by Israel last December remain in South Lebanon for their alleged affiliation with the Hamas.

Arab states taking part in the peace process are to meet March 20 in Damascus.

"We are deploying all our efforts so that the Arab position is homogenous and unified," said Mr. Arafat.

The PLO has no direct role in the peace process, but the Palestinian delegation takes its cues from Tunis, PLO headquarters.

Referring to the new wave of unrest in the occupied territories, Mr. Arafat called for urgent international protection.

"I ask the United States and Russia to take practical and frank position to stop this massacre," he said. He said Israeli soldiers in the Gaza Strip received orders Friday to "shoot Palestinians without hesitation."

Soldiers and Israeli civilians killed 12 Palestinians this month in the occupied territories, mostly during riots and stone-throwing incidents. At least seven Israelis have been killed in the same time.

The four latest Palestinian victims of Israeli gunfire were all from the Khan Yunis refugee camp, a shantytown of 43,000 population in the occupied Gaza Strip.

Maher Naim Al Majayda, 10, was cut down by army gunfire Saturday when crowds of stone-throwing Palestinians tried to chase Israeli troops who set up a lookout post in the camp.

He was hit in the chest. His family took his body from Nasser Hospital in Khan Yunis town to bury it before sundown before Israeli soldiers could remove it for an autopsy.

Taleb Faris Al Hamane, 16, was hit in the leg and bled to death during the same clash. He survived long enough to reach Nasser Hospital, but doctors there could not deal with the severity of his wound. He died while being transferred to a hospital in Gaza City.

Ali Abu Yunus, 23, was shot and killed by soldiers as they responded to assailants who shot and slightly wounded a reserve soldier Sunday.

Salam Sharab, 10, was walking to school in the Khan Yunis refugee camp he got caught in the crossfire in the Sunday clash. His father, Farhan, is a construction worker in Israel. He left three siblings.

Defendants in Egyptian trial repudiate video evidence

CAIRO (AP) — Suspected Muslim militants charged with attacking tourists in Egypt repudiated in court Saturday a videotaped proclamation that their leader is a blind Egyptian cleric allegedly linked with suspects in the bombing of New York's World Trade Centre.

They also denied that they attacked tourists, a charge that a colleague altered as video cameras whirled at a previous court session.

"Omar Abdul Rahman is only a religious guide and a spiritual leader for many factions of youth," a defendant said during the second court session for 43 men facing charges that could on conviction condemn many of them to hang.

As for the charge against them, the speaker said: "We are not responsible for the operations against tourism. We are behind bars, and some of us have been in prison for the last two years."

As Saturday's trial convened, a police spokesman in the troubled southern city of Assiut said a suspected extremist was shot dead in his hideout after he fired on raiding police. The spokesman also announced the arrest of 50 suspects in a continuing anti-extremist sweep.

Mostly bearded and wearing white robes favoured by Islamic fundamentalists in Egypt, the defendants clustered around the speaker so reporters could not see him as he voiced complaints from inside the defendants' cage.

After the speaker denied that Al Gamaa Al Islamiya (Islamic Group) was responsible for attacks on tourists since last autumn, the military prosecutor intervened.

He entered into evidence two video tapes taken at a previous court session. Defendant Hisham Abdul Zaher confessed in them, over the objection of his codefendants, that Al Gamaa Al Islamiya assassinated former President Anwar Sadat in 1981



Sheikh Omar Abdul Rahman (file photo)

and two other prominent Egyptians since then.

The defence objected, but the government's Middle East News Agency said the presiding judge, Mohammad Wagdi Al Leithy, overruled.

He said Mr. Abdul Zaher knew his voluntary statement was recorded by the press and television. Tapes submitted to the court, he said, were taken by police.

The judge's remarks were tantamount to accepting the tapes as evidence for the prosecution.

The militants, purportedly led by Sheikh Abdul Rahman, who lives in the United States, want to install an Iranian-style Islamic theocracy in Egypt.

Gen. Leithy, the senior military judge hearing the case in a converted theatre on an armed forces base in the desert outside Cairo, asked each defendant in turn whether he had committed the crimes of which he was accused.

The defendants, being held in metal cages along the side of the courtroom, all denied the charges and some interrupted the proceedings to renew allegations that intelligence officers had tortured

them to obtain confessions.

Gen. Leithy called one of the accused to the front of the court to see weals on his legs and ordered him inspected by a doctor.

Each defendant was summoned from the cages to be confronted with a packet of physical evidence against him, including knives, clothing and books, and asked whether the material belonged to him.

All denied any knowledge of the materials except for some of the books, which defendants said could be bought anywhere.

One of the men in court had been arrested only Friday. He protested he was being held in error and his name simply resembled that of someone listed in the charge sheet as on the run.

The government began to refer all serious militant cases to military courts last November because civilian judges have proved slow in reaching verdicts and in some cases appear to have been sympathetic to or intimidated by the militants.

The first military trials of 46 militants ended after little more than a month with eight death sentences.

Tension marks Kurd festivities in Turkey

CIZRE, Turkey (Agency) — Turkish Kurds, heeding a ceasefire call by guerrilla leader Abdullah Ocalan, celebrated their Nowruz spring festival in low-key style Sunday.

Tanks, armoured cars and sharpshooters moved overnight into the middle of this southeastern town, scene of the worst of last year's Nowruz violence which killed about 100 people.

Groups of townspeople gathered to dance around bonfires in rain-drenched backstreets, but youngsters who began shouting nationalist slogans were swiftly hushed by their elders.

"We don't want blood to be spilled," Cizre Mayor Husein Hasi told reporters. "People are entitled to reap the fruits of the ceasefire. This is a new era."

Mr. Ocalan, head of the Marxist Kurdistan Labour Party (PKK), declared Wednesday that he was ordering a unilateral 26-day ceasefire in the independence war he has fought since 1984.

He also renounced the quest for a separate Kurdish state in the immediate future and said he wanted to embark on a peaceful political struggle. He said his guerrillas would fire only if attacked, but did not say they would lay down their guns.

The Turkish government has rejected any idea of negotiating with the PKK, saying rebels must surrender unconditionally.

The Nowruz festival, which Kurds often turned into an occasion for nationalist demonstrations in the past, is seen as a crucial test of whether the PKK ceasefire might lead to the end of a conflict which has cost about 5,500 lives.

Prime Minister Suleyman Demirel has said Kurds may celebrate Nowruz freely as long as order was maintained.

"Let everyone celebrate Nowruz if they want to, but let no one be harmed. Peace and order reigning in Turkey is to the benefit of all. The world is watching us. Do not indulge in actions that would discredit Turkey," he said Friday.

But Mr. Hasi said the emergency rule regional governor had said permission had to be sought 72 hours in advance for Nowruz celebrations.

"We have told the people demonstrations cannot take place and asked them not to get provoked," he said.

In the troubled city of Batman, flashpoint for a deadly feud between the PKK and the fun-

damentalist Hizbollah group, a 17-year-old youth was killed by a ricocheting bullet on Saturday night, apparently caused by celebratory gunfire.

Batman Governor Zeki Samal said the town was quiet. Some bonfires had been lit, but no security problems were reported.

In the southeastern capital Diyarbakir, arsonists set fire to a freight car in the train station. People dancing around bonfires shouted slogans, but the city was generally quiet.

A state-paid village guard was wounded in a 45-minute gunbattle in Cizre on Friday night. Cizre Governor Omer Adar said the PKK had tried to enter the district where the village guards live. Townspeople said the village guards fired first.

Hurriyet newspaper said a PKK commander named Semdin Sakik was apparently defying Mr. Ocalan's ceasefire order.

It quoted a statement from Mr. Sakik found on a captured PKK fighter as saying: "Our armed army guerrillas will celebrate Nowruz as fit by actions which will explode over the heads of the colonialists."

But people in Cizre, reputed to be a stronghold of support for the PKK, seemed determined to avoid last year's clashes.

Only a few small groups, mostly children, sang and danced in front of the traditional Bonfires.

"Long live liberty, down with colonialism," the youths sometimes chanted. "We want to live as human beings. Down with fascism."

One group sang patriotic songs in Kurdish until two approaching armoured cars sent the dancers fleeing in panic. After the vehicles passed, no-one returned to the dying fires.

Friday night saw rebels and security forces in Cizre exchange automatic weapons and heavy machine-gun fire in a shootout that also involved some mortar fire.

An official said it began with "harassing fire" on government buildings. But many Kurds contended it had been staged to cow the people.

The government appeared worried about traditional Lot-Spots in the region. Troops barricaded the road to the nearby provincial centre of Sirnak and would only allow those to pass who good prove they lived there. Sirnak was the scene of pitched battles during last year's Nowruz celebrations.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

JORDAN TELEVISION	
Tel. 773111-19	
PROGRAMME TWO	
17:30	Cartoon Film
18:35	Les Grand Moments du Cinéma
19:00	News in French
19:15	Magazine Sportif
19:30	News in Hebrew
20:00	News in Arabic
20:30	Step by Step
21:10	Martin Bay
22:00	News in English
22:30	Vietnam
PRAYER TIMES	
06:17	Fajr
05:34	(Ghorib) Dhuhr
11:43	Dhuhr
15:11	'Asr
17:52	Maghreb
19:09	'Isha
CHURCHES	
St. Mary of Nazareth Church Swifeth, Tel. 810740	
Assistance of God Church, Tel. 632785	
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590	
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440	
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757	
Yerusalem Church Tel. 623466	
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623441	
Anglican Church Tel. 652826, Tel. 623543	
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331	
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 773261	
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751	
Assiut International Church Tel. 683326	
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 624328	
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Tel. 823824, 624932	
Church of the Nazarene Tel. 675691	
WEATHER	
Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.	
Slight rise in temperatures will take place and some clouds will appear at various altitudes. Winds will be north-westerly moderate. In Aqaba, winds will be northerly moderate and seas calm.	
Min./Max. temp.	

Amman	5/16
Aqaba	10/24
Deir	4/17
Jordan Valley	9/23
Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 13, Aqaba 21 Humidity readings: Amman 71 per cent, Aqaba 45 per cent.	
USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS	
NIGHT DUTY	
AMMAN:	
Dr. Mohammad Saqr	652693
Dr. Isam Al Assar	802094
Dr. Ahmad Yousef	765384
Dr. Mohammad Imran	612232
First pharmacy	661912
Fundus pharmacy	778336
Al Assar pharmacy	670255
Nairoth pharmacy	623672
Al Salam pharmacy	636730
Yacoub pharmacy	644945
Shamoun pharmacy	637660
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Water Authority	680100
Jordan Electricity Authority	815615
Electric Power	633681
Company	06-53300
RJ Flight Information	06-53300
Queen Alia Int. Airport	06-53300
HOSPITALS	
AMMAN:	
Hussein Medical Centre	81381332
Khalid Maternity, J. Amn.	6424816
Akileh Maternity, J. Amn.	6424816
Abel Amman Maternity	6424816
Madhat, J. Amman	6424816
Al-Ahli, Abadi	6441646
Shamoun Hospital	669131
University Hospital	845845
Al-Munster Hospital	6672279
The Islamic, Abadi	66612157
Al-Ahli, Abadi	6441646
Italian, Al-Muhajira	7771013
Al-Bashir, J. Amman	7751126
Amn. Madhat	87161115
Queen Alia Hospital	60224030
Amal Hospital	674135
ZARQA:	
Zarqa Govt. Hospital	09-983323
Zarqa National Hospital	09-983323
Tu Sina Hospital	09-983323
Al-Ehram Modern Hospital	09-983323
Princess Beena Hospital	02273335
Ovish Catholic Hospital	02272275

Other Flights (Terminal 2)	
09:30	Aden (AL)
09:35	Cairo (MS)
10:30	Abu Dhabi, Doha (GF)
10:35	Khartoum (SU)
10:45	Istanbul (TK)
10:50	Vienna, Larnaca (OS)
11:30	Dubai, Damascus (EM)
DEPARTURES	
Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)	
06:15	Beirut (RJ)
07:15	Sanaa (RJ)
11:15	Toronto Montreal (RJ)
12:10	London (RJ)
12:15	Frankfurt (RJ)
12:45	Cairo (RJ)
12:50	Dhahran (RJ)
12:55	Dubai, Karachi (RJ)
13:30	Bahrain, Doha (RJ)
14:30	Abu Dhabi, Muscat (RJ)
ARRIVALS	
Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)	
05:00	New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
07:15	Sanaa (RJ)
09:30	London (RJ)
10:30	Beirut (RJ)
10:45	Cairo (RJ)
11:15	Dubai, Doha (RJ)
11:30	Vienna, Larnaca (OS)
11:45	Dubai, Damascus (EM)
12:10	Frankfurt (RJ)
12:45	Cairo (RJ)
12:50	Dhahran (RJ)
12:55	Dubai, Karachi (RJ)
13:30	Bahrain, Doha (RJ)
14:30	Abu Dhabi, Muscat (RJ)
Other Flights (Terminal 2)	
06:15	Beirut (RJ)
07:15	Sanaa (RJ)
11:15	Toronto Montreal (RJ)
12:10	London (RJ)
12:15	Frankfurt (RJ)

Bahrain, Abu Dhabi, Muscat (GF)	17:30	Khartoum (SU)
	17:35	Istanbul (TK)
	20:00	Dubai (EM)

MARKET PRICES

Uppercase flower price in fms per kg.

Apple	700 / 530
Banana	700 / 700
Banana (Mukdamsay)	640 / 640
Beans	1100 / 900
Cabbage	180 / 50
Carrot	180 / 120
Cauliflower	200 / 150
Cucumbers (large)	150 / 180
Cucumbers (small)	300 / 200
Eggplant	280 / 180
Garlic	800 / 600
Grapefruit	200 / 150
Lemon	370 / 300
Marrow (large)	400 / 200
Marrow (small)	440 / 350
Mint	100
Onion (dry)	210 / 180
Onion (green)	220 / 160
Orange	480 / 35
Pepper (hot)	800 / 600
Pepper (sweet)	600 / 400
Potato	220 / 140
Tomato	150 / 60
Spinach	

Home News



KING HOSTS IFTAR: His Majesty King Hussein Sunday hosts an Iftar banquet in honor of the secretaries general of political parties, heads of municipal councils, as well as leaders of tribes and Palestinian camps. The banquet was attended by Princes Faisal Ben Al Hussein and Ghazi Ben Muhammad, Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shakir, Royal Court Chief Khaled Al Karaki, Private Chamberlain Prince Ali Ben Nayef, Minister of

Municipal and Rural Affairs and the Environment Abdul Razzaq Tobeisbat, Amman Mayor Mohammad Al Bashir, the King's Advisor on Tribal Affairs Sharif Fawaz Zaben, the Imam of the Hashemite Court Ahmad Hakeel, and the director of the Foreign Ministry's Department of Palestinian Affairs. The King and the guests performed Al Maghrebi prayers together.

Sheikh Alami eulogised

AMMAN (J.T.) — The late Saadeddin Al Alami, the former mufti of Jerusalem who died last month at the age of 82, was eulogised Saturday at a special ceremony held at the Royal Cultural Centre (RCC) in Amman.

Sheikh Alami was a staunch defender of the holy city of Jerusalem, and Arabs and Muslims can never forget his struggle to liberate the city from the hands of the Zionists, said Palestinian Ambassador to Jordan Al Tayeb Abdul Rahim.

The Crusades had ended with a defeat in the Arab region and so will Zionism, said Senator Kamel Sharif, another eulogist at the ceremony.

He said that the Arab victory over the Zionism was certain.

Fuad Farraj, a former parliament deputy from the Jerusalem constituency, praised the late Sheikh Alami for his role in promoting Islamic-Christian solidarity in the course of his endeavours to defend the holy



Saadeddin Al Alami

battle to protect the holy sites in the Jerusalem.

The eulogy was attended by representatives of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), several members of parliament and the Palestine National Council members in Amman.

Also attending was Minister of Information Mahmoud Al Sharif.

HOME NEWS IN BRIEF

Procedures outlined for well-wishers

AMMAN (Petra) — The Royal Protocol Office Sunday issued a communique explaining procedures for His Majesty King Hussein's reception of well-wishers on the first day of Eid Al Fitr, expected to start Tuesday or Wednesday. The communique said congratulators will gather on the first day of the feast at Raghadan Palace at 6.45 a.m. and His Majesty's procession will arrive at the palace at 7 a.m. It said former prime ministers, ministers, senators and deputies will gather in the palace's front yard to wait for the King's arrival, while the other well-wishers will wait in the backyard of the palace.

Crown Prince congratulates Sutrismo

AMMAN (Petra) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan Sunday sent a cable to the newly-designated Indonesian Vice-President Try Sutrismo, congratulating him on his appointment and wishing him success in serving his people.

Libyan minister ends visit to Jordan

AMMAN (Petra) — Libya's Foreign Minister Omar Al Muntasser Sunday left Amman at the end of a two-day official visit to Jordan during which he held talks with senior Jordanian officials on Arab, regional and international issues of common interest. Mr. Muntasser also discussed bilateral relations and means of enhancing them, particularly in the economic field. Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shakir Saturday received Mr. Muntasser and discussed with him Libya's dispute with Western countries over the bombing of an American airliner over Lockerbie, Scotland in 1988 as well as Jordanian-Libyan cooperation in the economic arena. Following the meeting, which was attended by Foreign Minister Kamel Abu Jaber, Libya's ambassador to Jordan and the Jordanian ambassador to Libya, Mr. Muntasser told the Jordan News Agency, Petra, that his discussions with Sharif Zeid dealt with issues of common concern to both countries as well as regional developments. Upon departure from Queen Alia International Airport (QAIA), Mr. Muntasser was seen off by his Jordanian counterpart Dr. Kamel Abu Jaber and senior Foreign Ministry officials, in

addition to the Jordanian ambassador to Libya and the Libyan ambassador to Jordan.

Austrian envoy meets with ministers

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Information Mahmoud Al Sharif Sunday received in his office the Austrian Ambassador to Jordan Michael Stiglbauer and reviewed with him bilateral relations and scopes of cooperation in the information field between Jordan and Austria. Also Sunday, Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Izzeddin Al Khatib Al Tamimi reviewed with Dr. Stiglbauer scopes of bilateral cooperation and means of enhancing them.

Balqa marks Karameh Battle

AMMAN (Petra) — Balqa Governors Eid Al Qatarnah, the district governors of Deir Alla and South Shouneh districts, the South Shouneh mayor and the directors of government departments in Balqa governorate Sunday visited the Martyr's Monument in South Shouneh, where they laid a wreath of flowers. The visit coincides with Jordan's commemoration of the Karameh Battle. Boy scouts and girl guides from different schools and student delegations from various state and national universities also visited the monument. On the occasion, Balqa schools held various celebrations during which speeches were made, and national songs were sung through the school broadcasting services. Cultural and sports activities were also organised and exhibitions held to mark the occasion.

Tafleh governor lights up Shaitam village

TAFLEH (Petra) — To mark Jordan's celebrations of the 40th anniversary of His Majesty King Hussein's accession to the Throne, Tafleh Governor Mohammad Talhouh Sunday inaugurated the electrification project of Shaitam village in Tafleh governorate. Shaitam was listed as one of the areas to be linked with electric power as part of a national project for the electrification of rural and badia regions, according to Director of the Jordan Electricity Authority Office in Tafleh Yasin Khasawneh. Mr. Khasawneh said that 97 per cent of the villages and population concentrations in the governorate is connected to the electric power.

Palestinians

(Continued from page 1)

Tunis does represent their wishes and desire. Second, the Palestinians needed to show the Israelis and the Americans that they don't accept a violation of law and order — in other words U.N. Security Council Resolutions, the PNC member told the Jordan Times.

A Jerusalem Media and Communications Centre opinion poll which was published in February indicated that 83 per cent of the people in the occupied territories believe that the negotiating team should not return to the peace talks until the expellee issue is addressed.

Both support for and expectations of the peace talks have declined considerably since the peace process began in October of 1991, PLO officials monitoring

events in the occupied territories say.

The public opinion poll conducted by the Jerusalem Media and Communications Centre indicates that only 60 per cent of the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank believe the Palestinian delegation to the peace talks should return "after the expellees have returned." Only 13 per cent said they thought negotiations was the appropriate method for solving the Palestinian problem.

Both the PLO leadership and that of the Islamic Resistance movement Hamas question the results of the recent poll. But they admit that support for Palestinian participation in the talks is waning.

"We are at a low point right now," said the senior Arafat advisor from Tunis. "But despite the disappointment that the peo-

ple feel about the lack of progress thus far we cannot and must not quit the negotiations."

Mr. Aruri said in Amman: "People have seen no results. On the contrary they are seeing harsher policies being practiced by the Israelis since the 'peaceful' Rabin government took over."

While opponents of the peace talks, namely the group of 10 Palestinian parties most of whom are based on Damascus, say that the Palestinians should pull out of the talks, Palestinian analysts warn of grave consequences.

"If we give up and pull out, the Israelis will have their way and start building settlements on the West Bank again at full scale. By the time they are finished the West Bank will look like the Galilee triangle and we won't be able to negotiate over even the smallest piece of land," warned Arafat's advisor.

Shipping agents welcome European group's decision to maintain regular service to Aqaba

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The Jordanian Shipping Agents Association (JSAA) Sunday welcomed the decision by a French-based consortium to maintain its regular shipping lines to Aqaba despite the withdrawal of one of its member companies.

Tawfiq Kassar, president of the association, noted that the move by Marseille-based Red Sea Express (RSE) to charter a new ship and continue its regular service to Aqaba comes at a time when many other shipping companies are reluctant to send their vessels to the Red Sea port in view of the difficulties posed by the requirements laid down by the enforcers of the international sanctions against Iraq.

"The Red Sea Express offers the main container service to Aqaba as opposed to other companies which discharge their containers at Jeddah for (transshipment) to Aqaba," Mr. Kassar said.

The JSAA's president noted that Red Sea Express was the only international shipowner to continue regular sailings to Aqaba throughout the Gulf crisis, despite the difficulties brought on by the imposition of sanctions against Iraq and overzealous enforcement of the embargo.

The Red Sea Express consortium, which will comprise the CMA, DSR and CAMEL companies after the withdrawal of Merzario Maritima with effect from March 31, has chartered a

newly-built ship, Hansa Berlin, to replace "General Delgado," which belonged to Merzario, to continue the container service to Aqaba.

Three other RSE ships in the Aqaba service are CMA's RS "Eureka," Camel's RS "Ensemble," and DSR line's RS "Entrust."

"We firmly believe that customers demand a fully-dedicated, regular liner service, providing direct calls to Aqaba, Hodeidah, Port Sudan and Jeddah... for shippers to know their cargo will arrive at destination of the vessel it was actually loaded on in Europe," said a press release from the consortium.

"RSE is the only line serving the full range of the main Red

Sea ports in a regular, direct-call basis," it said.

The release said the service would have an improved efficiency — with sailings every 11 days from Thamesport, Rotterdam, Antwerp, Hamburg and Le Havre.

"RSE reaffirms its dedication and leader position in this trade, challenging the many indirect lines who have taken a sudden transshipment interest in some of the Red Sea ports."

It was an indirect reference to the shipping lines which, Mr. Kassar said, now resort to a "feeder service" from Jeddah. Under this arrangement, which, according to Mr. Kassar, adversely affects the prominence of Aqaba, small container ships

operate a shuttle service between the Saudi port and Aqaba.

The service allows the international shipping lines to avoid the delays and problems posed by the prerequisites laid down by the U.S.-led enforcers of the sanctions against Iraq, but costs the Jordanian importer higher freight.

"It is a welcome move by RSE to maintain their services to Aqaba and we appreciate it very much," said Mr. Kassar.

Beyond the immediate context of continued services, the RSE decision is seen indicative of the consortium's continued confidence in Aqaba's role and its prominence it would regain if and when the sanctions against Iraq are lifted.

Princess Basma inspects Jerash, Ajloun districts

JERASH (Petra) — Her Royal Highness Princess Basma Sunday pledged support for all efforts aimed at setting up income-generating projects and narrowing pockets of poverty in the Kingdom.

Princess Basma was speaking during a tour in Jerash and Ajloun districts, which included Ajloun, Rimon and Mastaba villages, to follow up on activities of the Third Annual Charity Campaign launched by Queen Alia Jordan Social Welfare Fund (QJAF), and to inspect services offered to people.

The Princess called on citizens to crystallise practical ideas set to benefit people in this region.

She said QJAF is ready to provide the necessary social services in accordance with the available resources.

Princess Basma contributed the costs of establishing a social service centre in Rimon, in addition

to JD 2,000 to support the Mastaba Charitable Society.

The Princess supervised the distribution of assistance to 1,000 needy families in both districts, thus bringing to 5,260 the number of families benefiting from the charity campaign nationwide.

Princess Basma was accompanied on her visits by the Ajloun and Jerash district governors, Lower House of Parliament member Issa Al Rimoni and senior government officials from both districts.

On Saturday Princess Basma attended an Iftar hosted by the Jordan Inter-Continental Hotel to honour orphans.

The Iftar banquet, which was organised by the Save the Children Federation, was held at Al Nuzha Social Services Centre.

Princess Basma distributed gifts to the children at the end of the Iftar.



Her Royal Highness Princess Basma Sunday tours Jerash and Ajloun districts to inspect activities of charity campaign and needs of the area's people

Arab labour meeting to discuss population

AMMAN (J.T.) — Minister of Labour Abdul Karim Al Kabarti Sunday chaired a meeting at his office to review preparations for a pan-Arab labour conference to be held in Amman early next month.

His Majesty King Hussein is expected to deliver the inaugural speech at the conference, to open formally at the Al Hussein Youth City's Palace of Culture on April 5, according to Ministry of Labour officials.

The week-long conference is expected to involve labour-related issues such as the role of Arab women in promoting socio-economic development in the Arab World, a report by the director of the Arab Labour Office (ALO) concerning pan-Arab labour cooperation, financial issues and the implementation of agreements concluded at previous labour conference, officials said.

Also on the agenda, they said, are an Arab Nation memorandum to be submitted to the International Labour Conference opening in Geneva in June this year, a pan-Arab strategy on employment, labour integration in the Arab World, the employment of handicapped persons, trade union freedoms, and occupational safety.

In an interview with Al Ra'i

Arabic daily Sunday, Mr. Kabarti said the conference, organised in cooperation with the Arab League, the U.N. Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) and the U.N. Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), intends to tackle several major issues related to population in the Arab World.

He explained that the labour conference is part of preparation for U.N.-sponsored conference on population and development due to be held in Cairo in September 1994.

The minister said he expected that several recommendations will be issued by the participants who, he said, include representatives of all the Arab countries.

Arab League Secretary General Ismat Abdul Maguid, who is due to arrive in Amman on April 4, will represent the Arab League at the conference.

Representatives of several regional and international organisations concerned with population growth, development, migrations and women's status are also expected to attend, according to Ministry of Labour officials.

They said that following the opening session, participants will continue their meetings at the Amman Marriott Hotel until April 22.

Canada donates \$20,000 to aid needy in Jordan

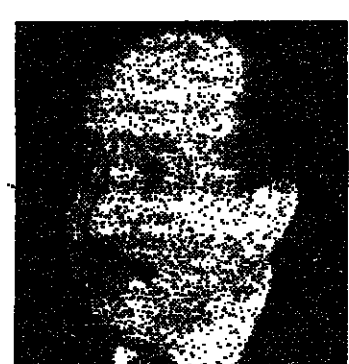
AMMAN (Petra) — The Canadian government has donated \$20,000 to the Ministry of Social Development to help it implement its projects benefiting needy families of Jordan, according to an announcement by Minister of Social Development Amin Awad Mashaqbeh.

Some of the funds will be used to provide loans to heads of needy families trying to start their small income-generating projects, said the minister in a statement Sunday.

Widows, divorced women and orphans who have no income whatsoever will also receive part of the funds in monthly payments from the ministry, Dr. Mashaqbeh added.

The minister made the statement during his tour of the villages which will benefit from the projects located around Khirbat Al Samra and Dajaniyah areas of the Mafrqa governorate.

While on the tour, Dr. Mashaqbeh distributed sugar, rice,



Amin Awad Mashaqbeh

cooking oil and clothing to 120 needy families.

He said that through the help of 600 charitable societies and several non-Jordanian organisations, the ministry has been providing assistance to the needy in Jordan.

The ministry's strong arm is the National Aid Fund (NAF) which was created in 1986 by the government to help the poor.

Food supply abundant — minister

AMMAN (Petra) — The Ministry of Supply Sunday issued a statement to reassure the public that the food supply in the Kingdom during the coming Eid Al Fitr, the feast marking the end of the holy month of Ramadan, is more than adequate.

The ministry said it has supplied the markets with quantities of beef and mutton that exceed the normal requirements of the local markets.

The total amount of meat supplied Saturday was estimated at 125 tonnes, said the statement, quoting an official ministry source.

The ministry has prepared a list of the bakeries that are to remain open in rotation during the feast, which will last from Monday through Friday.

WHAT'S GOING ON

The following listings are compiled from monthly bulletins and the daily Arabic press. Readers are advised to verify the listed time and place with the concerned institutions.

EXHIBITIONS

- ★ Scientific exhibition of projects designed by students at the Jordan University of Science and Technology (JUST), including computers and computer programmes, at JUST.
- ★ Exhibition entitled the Memory of Silk, displaying traditional Jordanian and Palestinian costumes, shawls, carpets, pottery copperware, from the Widad Kassar collection — at the French Cultural Centre.

LECTURE

- ★ Lecture entitled "Monolithic Pillars in Jordan" by Crastan Köber, who is conducting research on standing stones in Jordan, at the Friends of Archaeology Centre at 7 p.m.

CONDOLENCES

Irbid — With deep sadness and grief, the Jarrar family in both Banks of Jordan, mourn the death of: **Stefan Mousa Abdul Ghani Jarrar** who passed away at the age of 10 in France following an incurable disease.

Condolences are offered at the residence of the late Abdul Ghani Ahmad Jarrar in Irbid, Qurashah Street, near Al Rashid taxi, for three days starting on Monday March 22, 1993.

Cable condolences to: **Mousa Jarrar Fax: 0033/48550555, Paris.**

جوليبى

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Jordan Times

An Independent Arab political daily published in English by the Jordan Press Foundation.
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Morillon, the example

AMONG THE thousands of Western generals, one, Philippe Morillon, stands tall. His achievement demonstrates a hope that the military in the West were not all trained and organised to fight liberation movements in the Third or second worlds or abet repressive and tyrannical regimes in the south.

Gen. Morillon last week led a U.N. convoy with food and medicine to the Bosnian town of Srebrenica, besieged and constantly bombed by Serbian forces. After delivering aid to the town, the general evacuated the wounded from the town to another town, Tuzla, only to be greeted on arrival by a barrage of 120 mm shelling from the Serbs.

That Bosnian towns and villages are being systematically destroyed, and Bosnian women raped, seems to invoke little reaction from the West beyond American "daring" air-drop of blankets and canned food for a people whose plight extends beyond food to basic survival under the hail of Serbian bombardment. The word "shame" — if shame still means anything in certain quarters in the West — seems to be an understatement in describing the complacent attitude of some countries.

While Washington and London lead the campaign that ripples Iraq and its people and while they contemplate intervention in less explosive areas in the world, say south Sudan, they practically turn a blind eye on the slaughter of a whole ethnic minority in former Yugoslavia.

Why the West, especially the more able countries in it, is so indifferent, at least in deed, to the plight of the Muslim Bosnians, nobody knows. From our own point of view we can only see that this attitude will only aggravate Muslim feelings towards the West and will certainly lead to a deepening of the already existing divide between our peoples and countries.

When President Bill Clinton took over from President Bush earlier this year, he was reported to have summoned his generals with the intention of assuming greater U.S. role in a wretched Yugoslavia. But confronted with the "facts" about the "cost" of direct intervention, the president seems to have held back on his campaign promises. Alas, one more liberal, and supposedly chief advocate and champion of human rights in the world, chose to do nothing substantial or the miserable Bosnian Muslims.

Generals in Western Europe, at NATO headquarters and in the vast lands of the U.S., who for decades readied themselves for the "Soviet threat" appear today incapable of dealing with a much less menacing threat. Is not cowardice the greatest of sins? Or is just the continued flow of cheap oil that is worth American and Western lives and sacrifice?

Gen. Morillon truly deserves His Majesty's medal and more, not only for his personal courage but also because he is setting an example to follow in international relations.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

A COLUMNIST in Al Ra'i Arabic daily Sunday strongly attacked the United States for trying to extend sanctions on the Iraqi people. The Clinton administration is not satisfied with merely delaying a discussion on the question of the sanctions until the end of this month, but also has been issuing false reports about alleged Iraqi atrocities during the brief occupation of Kuwait, said Tareq Masarweh. Citing the testimony of the Kuwaiti ambassador's daughter to the United States as an example of false allegations, the writer said that the United States is trying hard to blackmail the Security Council members and influencing their decisions out of hatred of the Iraqi leadership and people and to extend the present sanctions that are causing untold sufferings to the innocent population. Referring to reports by the Red Cross and other organisations, which had stated that more than 2 million people in the north and south of Iraq are facing real starvation and are in desperate need of medical attention, the writer said that the reports alone should prompt the Security Council to end the unjust sanctions. He said it is the Americans who committed atrocities against the Iraqis and the Vietnamese people and ought to face trial for their crimes and not be innocent Iraqi people. Punishment should be dealt to the Americans who dropped unspecified quantities of uranium dust into the Iraqi soil, harming an entire population and not to the victims of such crime, the writer said. The Arab countries, for their part, the writer continued, should realise that it is illogical and unreasonable for anyone of them to maintain a siege of any Arab country, and a victim of American plots which should not through the efforts of sincere Arab leaders who believe in the Arab legitimacy and not in the Western style, U.S.-orchestrated legitimacy.

A columnist in Al Dustour urged the Arab countries to end their attempt to appease the Western countries at the expense of national interests. The time has come for the Arabs to turn their attention to solidarity, having realised that the U.N. Security Council resolutions are not implemented fairly, said Taher Al 'Idwan. The Arab countries involved in settling Libya's dispute with London, Washington and Paris ought to realise that it is enter for them to protect Libya and Arab interests rather than try to please the Western countries which are allied against Arab interests, said the writer. He said working together, the Arab states can achieve something positive to protect their national interest. It was the so-called understanding between Cairo and Damascus that provided the ground for the U.S.-led coalition's aggression on Iraq paved the way for the peace process upon the U.S. initiative and has influenced and directed the ongoing talks concerning the Lockerbie affair, said the writer. But, he said, the Arab states have so far failed to achieve anything as a result of this Cairo-Damascus understanding and, what is more, there are indications now that the Cairo-Damascus alliance is weakening as the two sides do not see eye to eye with regard to a number of issues. The writer claimed that while Damascus maintains strong ties with Iran, Egypt is involved in fighting off Iranian-backed Islamists and while Damascus rejects the idea of separate peace treaty with Israel, Egypt is known trying to mediate between Tel Aviv and Damascus for such objective. He said that under the circumstances, and in view of the fact that only the Arabs can handle their own affairs and protect their national interests, Arab leaders ought to stop all attempts to please the West and should take the matter into their own hands, giving due attention to Arab national interests.

WEEKLY POLITICAL PULSE

Jordan's inadequate policies

JORDAN APPEARS to be "flying low and safe" on several key regional and international issues on the premise that a low profile is considerably more sane and secure than a high profile in these trying times. This posture has increasingly characterised the country's policies ever since the outbreak of Gulf crisis when the Kingdom found itself isolated by countries and regions where international clout counts most. The country's relations with traditional friends and allies immediately suffered thereafter and became strained. This is not to dispute the validity of the country's position vis-a-vis the Gulf conflict that erupted on the heels of Iraq's invasion and occupation of Kuwait in 1990. In terms of merits, Jordan's stance on the conflict is still basically right albeit much misunderstood even by the country's closest allies and supporters. In the past Gulf crisis era, democracy and the democratic process in the Kingdom preempted traditional objectives and became the focus of the government's policy in both the national and international arenas. In so doing, Amman's hot pursuit of pluralistic democracy per se suggests that that noble goal is all that counts in the conditions that prevail in the wake of the collapse of the Communist order worldwide and the advent of pluralistic democracy.

The question that remains is whether this seemingly deliberate and strategic decision to fly low is indeed safe in the long run. For starters, the immediate consequence of this national policy was the secondary role that Jordan started to perform on many regional and international levels.

With regard to the Arab-Israeli peace process, Jordan started to play second fiddle not only to the other concerned Arab countries but also to the Palestinian party. Suddenly Jordan began to act as if it does not count very much as far as the developing

issues in the region and elsewhere in the world are concerned. There is every reason to believe that this intentional low profile is not exactly benign and without much serious risk to the Kingdom in the long run.

The country received much support, both political and economic, when it assumed an unusually high profile on almost all regional issues. If the policy that the government is now assuming continues to advocate the so-called safer stance, there could be a moment in the future when the Kingdom could render itself increasingly marginal on matters that count most in shaping the future of the Middle East.

"The question that remains is whether this seemingly deliberate and strategic decision to fly low is indeed safe in the long run. For starters, the immediate consequence of this national policy was the secondary role that Jordan started to perform on many regional and international levels."

This ominous assessment as to where Jordan is heading calls for an urgent review lest the country permits its role to atrophy any further. If Jordan continues to believe that it is as central today as it had been in the past to major issues affecting the stability and progress of the region our policy makers will have to start making fresh appraisals for the future course of the country.

As noble as democracy is as a national policy, it cannot serve as the only central objective of the country's domestic and regional

policies. There must be a lot more on the mind of our policy makers than the development of democracy. The continued democratic process is obviously the proper setting in which other democratic goals must be pursued. But to put all our eggs in the democratic basket could be damaging even to the democratic process itself. Jordan must assume a more vibrant role in the peace process. It cannot be satisfied with the role of providing an umbrella for the Palestinian side. It is bad enough that Amman's precipitous decision to break all legal and administrative relations with the West Bank has contributed to the false Israeli argument that occupied territories have been rendered disputed territories.

On strictly legal grounds, this Israeli posture lacks credence and legitimacy. Still the decision to go ahead with the plan to give way to the Palestine Liberation Organisation's assumption of control over the fate and future of the West Bank before its liberation has had damaging results as well. Perhaps it is not too late to rectify past judgements that were taken with the best of intentions but nevertheless caused untold difficulties in the process.

Notwithstanding the ramifications of the decision to break relations with the West Bank in haste, there is still a big role for Jordan to play if it still chooses to perform it. This requires a higher profile for the country on all pressing subjects affecting the future of the region. In turn this recommended course would necessitate a more active international participation by Jordan on all levels. The role of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs must in turn be expanded and reactivated to reflect this new sense of confidence. There will come a time when material support to the Kingdom will resume but it cannot be expected to materialise soon as long as democracy and democracy alone is all that we are trying to sell regionally and domestically.

Avoiding a 'leap into the bottomless depths'

Yeltsin signs legislators' death warrant and risks new confrontation with Congress

By Vanora Bennett
Reuters

MOSCOW — President Boris Yeltsin, who announced Saturday he had signed the death warrant of Russia's militant supreme legislature, won worldwide fame in 1991 for his successful resistance to a right-wing coup.

The image of the strapping, white-haired leader rallying democrats from atop a tank during the August putsch was an icon for independent Russia in its euphoric first days.

But it has tarnished. Russia's conservative parliament, elected in Soviet days and hostile to reform, has battling Mr. Yeltsin for power since the collapse of the Soviet Union.

This month, at the eighth in a series of stormy parliamentary congresses, deputies voted away much of Mr. Yeltsin's authority. They ruled out a referendum to ask Russians whether they wanted to be ruled by him or by parliament.

On Saturday, Mr. Yeltsin struck back. He announced to the

nation he was taking special powers to force through the referendum.

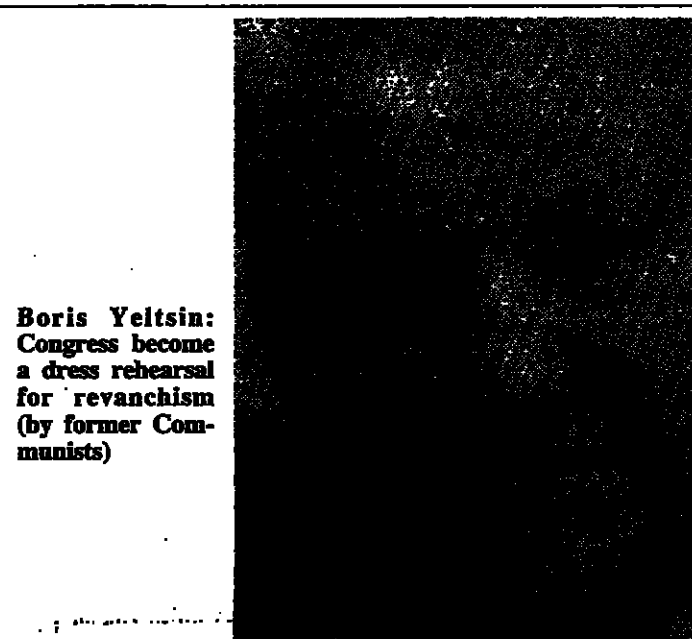
He said a vote of confidence and a referendum on a new constitution would be held on April 25 to abolish the congress.

Decisive action was needed to stop Russia plunging into anarchy, Mr. Yeltsin said. "Russia will not survive a second October revolution," he said grimly. "It will be a leap into the bottomless depths."

The first revolution in 1917 led to 70 years of Communist rule. Mr. Yeltsin said congress was full of Communist sympathisers and had already tried to repeat the cycle.

"The congress allowed the leadership of the parliament to set in motion the wheels of an anti-constitutional coup.... The congress became a dress rehearsal for revanchism by the former party nomenclatura which simply wants to deceive the people."

But both Mr. Yeltsin's vice-president and the head of the constitutional court, which has brokered past compromises with



Boris Yeltsin: Congress became a dress rehearsal for revanchism (by former Communists)

parliament, rejected Mr. Yeltsin's proposal within minutes of the president's televised address and declared it unconstitutional. "What happened tonight is the

political suicide of President Yeltsin," hardline Parliamentary Deputy Sergei Baburin told reporters afterwards.

Although Mr. Yeltsin is still

the single most popular political figure in Russia, that counts for little in a country weary of economic upheaval, growing crime, ethnic clashes and looming hyperinflation. Conservative ranks have swelled.

The former construction engineer has an uncanny ability to escape apparent political disaster at the last moment. But a new compromise, hammered out with Mr. Khasbulatov at the end of the eighth congress, left him manacled to parliament.

"The president is weak," maverick nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovskiy told reporters at the March congress.

"When a man is impotent his girlfriend goes off with another man. In the same way, the country now has to find a new president, a strong one."

Four years ago he had been sacked from his post as Moscow head of the all-powerful Communist Party and was on the verge of dismissal from the party's ruling politburo.

But a dogged determination and a history of being underesti-

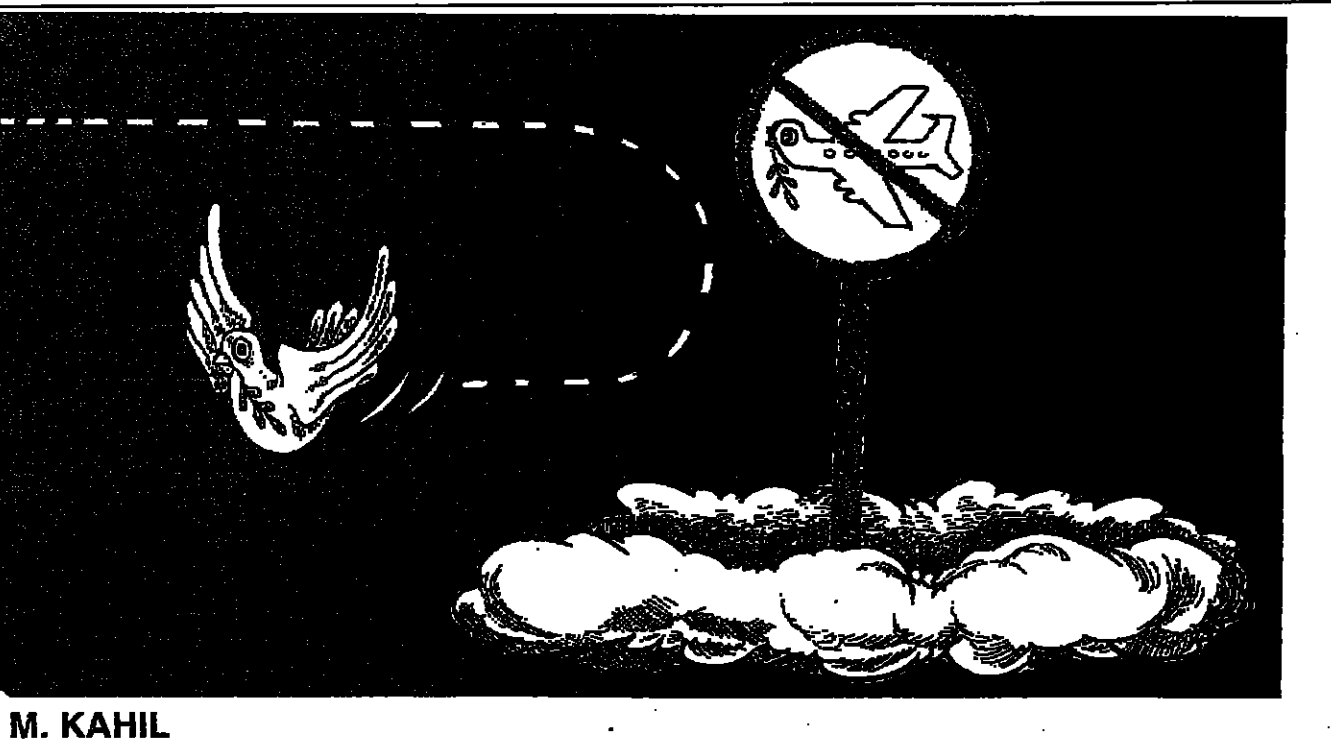
mated saw him secure the top seat of power, clinched by his heroic resistance to the coup behind the barricades around the Russian "White House."

His mentor and rival Mikhail Gorbachev was forced into early retirement in December 1991 to head a think-tank, leaving Mr. Yeltsin as first among equals among presidents in the Commonwealth of Independent States that succeeded the union.

Mr. Yeltsin has bucked authority since his early days as a Communist Party apparatchik in the Urals industrial city of Sverdlovsk.

When Mr. Gorbachev brought him to Moscow in 1985, Mr. Yeltsin rose quickly to become a junior member of the party politburo, then the highest power in the land. His demands for faster reform lost him favour and in 1988 he was sacked.

But in March 1989 he was elected to parliament in the country's first multi-candidate elections, gaining a phenomenal 89 per cent of the vote in Moscow. In July 1990, he gambled again.



M. KAHIL

A message of tolerance, friendship

The following is a message to Muslims by the president of the Pontifical Council, Francis Cardinal Arinze, on the occasion of Eid Al Fitr.

My Muslim Friends,

IT IS A joy for me, as President of the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue, to greet you at the end of your Ramadan fast on the occasion of Eid Al Fitr. It is with a feeling of religious solidarity that I send these greetings, because this year our Christian period of special prayer and penance the Season of Lent, has nearly coincided with the month of Ramadan.

During this time, we have been standing before God as two communities of believers, offering the homage and worship due to the One Creator, Sustainer, and Final Goal of all human life. We come to God humbly, in full awareness of our sinfulness and unworthiness, and ask God's mercy for our failings. We turn to God to seek his guidance and strength which alone can enable us to carry out the duties pre-

scribed by our respective religions.

Our duties to God include faith, prayer, repentance and good works. But we remember also that God has given us duties towards our neighbour and generally to human society. We live in an age where Islam and Christianity are found in every continent. In many countries of the world, Christians and Muslims today live side by side, work together in the same offices and factories, study in the same schools, form part of societies which are continually becoming more and more pluralist in nature.

What duty do we have towards these societies? What specific contribution are we called to make because of our religious commitments? These are questions upon which our period of fasting offers a special occasion for reflection.

We know that on every continent the pluralistic character of modern life has engendered tensions. Especially when exacerbated by political and economic factors, these tensions have at times in the past led to violence.

Still today, its various parts of the world, they all too often end in civil strife and warfare, with its inevitable results of human suffering, loss of life and property, and the displacement of peoples. Sometimes the pretext of these tensions is religion, in other cases it is race, language or social class.

We should try to eliminate or at least reduce tensions in society. We must be leaders in educating our own communities to live with others, to accept others with their differences, and yet at the same time to make their distinctive contributions to society. Secondly, we must give an example to all individuals and groups in our own societies that we, Christians and Muslims, are ready to live with others, to respect their dignity and rights, and to carry out our social responsibilities for the good of all.

A challenge which faces us in this increasingly pluralist world is to show that genuine religion, based on belief in God and the desire to do his will, is not a divisive and disruptive element in society, but that it is rather the firmest foundation for love of others, for justice, and for a more

fraternal and peaceful society. To those who believe that God is one, Creator of all, it follows that the human family is one. We share a common history and common hopes for the future. We, who believe that God's will is sovereign over all humankind, know that it is the will of God that every human person be treated with respect.

We must show the world that these beliefs form an enlightened and religious basis for social life. When Christians or Muslims are intolerant of others, when they give way to confessional hatred, racist attacks, the slaughter of innocents, so-called ethnic cleansing and other forms of oppression and wrongdoing, they bear false witness against the good and loving God in whom they believe, the season of Lent, like the month of Ramadan, is a time for examining our consciences, for acknowledging our sins and returning to God. Let us pray that God's grace help us all to live together in harmony and mutual respect.

I send you warm greetings as you approach the feast of the breaking of your fast!

LETTERS

Rabin's refutable claims

To the Editor:

IN THE press conference held at the White House on Monday March 15, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, highlighted the following points:

1. Israel did not want war in 1967: Egypt gave a solemn pledge to the U.S. not to start shooting. Israel gave the U.S. a grace period of 14 days, during which to resolve the problem of the Straits of Tiran, but made its onslaught on Egypt after 9 days only, when the negotiations for the reopening of the Straits of Tiran for Israeli navigation, were still going on, and showed definite signs of success. Does not the attack, when negotiations were going on, indicate that Israel wanted to abort the negotiations, in order not to lose the golden opportunity which presented itself when Egypt, following the Israeli promise to the U.S., cancelled all its military preparations, and went back to normal life? This is the reason why Egypt was taken by surprise.

On the other hand, if Israel really wanted peace, why did it not define its borders? Is it not because Israel was cherishing the dream of "Greater Israel", which would be from the Nile to the Euphrates?

2. Israel accepted Security Council Resolution 242, which clearly says "Acquisition of land by force is not permissible." If Israel did in fact accept this resolution, why (a) Did it not comply with the resolution and withdraw from the lands it occupied in 1967, by force? (b) Why did it annex the Arab part of Jerusalem and the Golan Heights, in violation of the U.N. interpretation of this Security Council resolution (d) Last but not least. Why, after lengthy discussion with the Israeli authorities, was James Baker, the former U.S. Secretary of State, compelled to say loudly "If Israel really wants to live in peace, she should stop dreaming of Greater Israel"? Is it not because he sensed that Israel was still cherishing the hope of expanding at the expense of the Arabs?

3. Israel warned Jordan in 1967 not to enter the war which it waged. This statement might be correct, but has Mr. Rabin forgotten that Egypt is a sister country to Jordan, and as such, Jordan was bound to help her sister, when attacked? Moreover, Egypt and Jordan were signatories to the Unified Arab Defence Pact, which considered all the Arab frontiers with Israel as one line, and therefore Jordan was duty bound to help Egypt.

In this connection, it may be of interest to remind Mr. Rabin, that in September, 1939, Great Britain and France did the same thing and rushed to help Poland when it was invaded by the German armies, out of sense of duty towards Poland, although they did not have a unified defence pact with her, nor is she a sister to any one of them. Why was this action considered legitimate, and that of Jordan was not? Or did Mr. Rabin want Jordan to dishonour its commitments towards the sister countries, as Israel did in the U.S. when it attacked Egypt nine days after it gave the U.S. government a grace period of 14 days?

Is it not ironic that the responsible officials in Israel are still trying to cheat the world with the same lies that they were telling the U.S. officials in 1967. These lies led Mr. Dean Rusk, the then U.S. Secretary of State, to scream out of exasperation in the face of Mr. Abba Eban, the then Israeli Minister of Foreign Affairs, "When are you going to stop telling us lies, and to force us to tell lies to our Arab friends, which would ultimately end up in us losing our credibility with them?"

Basil Ennab,
Amman.

House panel reports irregularities

(Continued from page 1)

colleagues who used their positions to secure jobs for friends and relatives.

One deputy, a former minister, who was not given the floor because the House decided to postpone the discussion of the committee findings, described the report as "weak," lacking in substance and concentrating on minor violations.

The government did not respond to the accusations. "Unfairness in appointments, the bureaucratic corruption that accompanies it and the lack of seriousness of the administrative reform programmes make the legislative authorities responsible for putting an end to these practices," the committee said.

In response to claims made earlier by some deputies that the digging into public-sector appointments was motivated by personal interests to settle old

scores, the panel urged lawmakers to use its findings to promote public interest.

"The findings of the committee are not aimed at settling old scores but are meant as a lesson... (and aimed at) overcoming this ordeal and promoting public interest," the committee said.

The committee proposed that all public-sector hiring be channelled through the Civil Service Commission and an account of all illegal appointments be included in the Audit Bureau's annual report to the House.

"This will prevent (officials) from using their offices for personal gains, favouring one member of society to others," the committee said.

Failure to do so, it said, will inevitably cause some concerned agencies, mainly the Lower House of Parliament, its credibility, it said.

Al Risheh yields more gas finds

(Continued from page 1)

kilometres from Al Risheh fields which now produce gas, indicating that Jordan has a substantial deposit of gas, he added.

Output from the present fields is used to fuel two 30-megawatt turbines in the Al Risheh region and the generated power is linked with the national grid. The capacity of the power-generating facility is expected to be raised by 30 megawatts by July this year.

The NRA, in cooperation with Petrobranca, a Canadian government agency, will increase current production of gas at Al Risheh to

46 million cubic feet per day from the current 23 million cubic feet per day and three other fields would be linked to the power-generating facility, according to the minister.

Mr. Abdul Ragheb expected the expansion project to be completed by early July.

The NRA will also, for the first time, launch three-dimensional seismicological surveys in the Dead Sea region with the objective of determining the geological nature of the region in preparation to digging oil wells, the minister said.

A better picture of the overall oil and gas situation in Jordan is

expected to emerge by the end of this year, he added.

The NRA will launch 100-metre deep exploratory wells in the Dead Sea area — in 'Ain Al Hommar in the central part — immediately after the 'Eid holidays, the minister said.

Seismological surveys will initially focus on the tip of the Dead Sea.

South Korea's Hanbo company, which has signed an oil and gas exploration contract with the Jordanian government, has almost completed the necessary geological and geophysical studies related to the digging of two exploratory wells in its area of concession, the minister said.

He said the company is

9 sentenced to death in Algeria

By Diana Abdallah
Reuters

ALGIERS (Agencies) — Algeria's anti-terrorist court, set up to combat Muslim fundamentalist violence, has sentenced nine men to death for the attempted murder of a policeman, the official news agency APS reported.

The sentences were part of a trial of 51 suspected members of an armed group charged with attacking a military barracks and killing an undisclosed number of people including a policeman.

Two people were sentenced to 15 years in prison. Several others were given jail terms of five to 10 years and seven were acquitted during proceedings that lasted until early Sunday morning.

Three of those given the death penalty were sentenced in absentia, as were eight others. It was not clear whether they were among those receiving jail terms or acquitted.

All were being tried in connection with an attack on a barracks in Algiers, where there is also a military prison holding the country's top Muslim fundamentalist leaders.

They were also charged with murder, possession of weapons and explosives, theft, associating with criminals and selling alcoholic drinks.

A total of 62 death sentences have been passed in Algeria since a state of emergency was decreed to combat violence acts by alleged fundamentalist groups.

The special court condemned five last month.

DUBAI — It's like the gold rush. The diggers are former Soviet citizens and they are mining the Arab Gulf.

The "gold" they are after is mainly electronic goods which can make their fortune back home.

Armed with a few thousand dollars each, hundreds fly in each week from the former Soviet republics to this booming Gulf emirate, snapping up electronic goods to sell at home at twice the price.

They arrive in airlines specially equipped for commercial tourism — with most of their seats stripped away to make space for the tonnes of overweight cargo they take back.

Russian drunks out other languages in downtown Dubai as small groups in colourful shirts and shorts shop around, loudly discussing the best deals.

They say televisions, stereos, video recorders, cameras and

A Russian invasion

Russian tourists flood Gulf souks in search of electronic goods

radios are the best buys, and even telephone sets which they say they get for one third of the price they would pay back home.

Most of what the Dubai shopkeepers call "Russian tourists" say the incentive for their frequent trips to the Gulf is a desperate need to boost their meagre incomes.

"We come here because at home people have no money for food or apartments. It is impossible to live from a salary," said Ingrida Puzikas, 21, from Lithuania.

"At home I make 15 a month," said her husband, Saulius Kaunas, 23, who works at a Vilnius electronics shop and is on his third visit to Dubai.

"The prices here are a lot cheaper. If we buy an item here for 500 we sell it back home for double the price."

"This time we are taking back

500 kilos (1,100 pounds), two television sets, two video recorders and two stereo systems," he said.

The surge in commercial tourism to the Gulf from the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) in the past year prompted private CIS-based airlines and Russia's state-owned Aeroflot to lay on an increasing number of charter flights to Dubai.

The airlines take special measures to accommodate tonnes of excess weight.

"We came on a charter Aeroflot plane. The group was 35 people and there were only 35 chairs to the Tupolev TU-154, the rest of the space they kept empty for the stuff we will be taking back," said Mr. Kaunas.

The big TU-154 Tri-Jet can normally carry up to 180 passengers.

The tourists say they don't pay

tax at home on the goods but one couple said they paid 600 per 100 kilos (220 pounds) of extra weight.

Dubai shopkeepers said that when the Russian wave started about a year ago, many brought memorabilia from the former Soviet Union to sell in dollars and use the money to buy electronics.

But that is slowly stopping because local laws ban selling goods on the streets without permits.

At a market in Abu Dhabi port two men from Tajikistan touted large plastic bags full of Russian-made watches, cameras and binoculars.

Binoculars were going for 150 dirhams (39), Russian-made Zenit cameras for 250 dirhams (68).

But port security guards intervened to stop the pair, saying they did not have a permit.

Language is another problem for the Russians.

"Most of them don't speak English, so we've had to learn a few words of Russian, just enough to make a sale," said one Indian shopkeeper.

Crisis awaits Serb-held region of Croatia

By Paul Holmes
Reuters

BELI MANASTIR, CROATIA — The plains that stretch into the distance around this Serb-held town in eastern Croatia have been ploughed to a rich brown, ready for planting.

But the men who should be working the soil are either carrying guns on a front line facing Croatian troops or have fled. An undeclared economic embargo is starving the area of imported fertiliser, seeds and fuel.

Now, United Nations officials say, a region where crops have grown in abundance for centuries could soon be in need of international relief supplies.

"If they are not able to cultivate the land there will be a very serious problem by the autumn," Cedric Thornberry, the civil affairs director of the U.N. Protection Force (UNPROFOR) in former Yugoslavia, said recently.

The Baranja region of eastern Croatia, which sweeps down to the River Danube and the border with Hungary, was seized by ethnic Serbs in mid-1991 in the war that erupted when Croatia broke away from former Yugoslavia.

Patrolled for the past year by Belgian peacekeeping troops, it is one of four U.N.-protected zones which cover the 30 per cent of Croatia where minority Serbs have declared their own "Republic of Serb Krajina."

U.N. military and civilian officials say ethnic tension has risen in Baranja since Croatia's army launched an offensive to reconquer strategic ground from the Serbs in the mountainous far west of Croatia.

Colonel Wilfried Heyvaert, commander of the Belgian U.N. battalion, said six people had been murdered in Serb extremist attacks on members of Baranja's dwindling Croat community since the offensive began on January 22.

The dead include a Croat couple in their 60s killed in their home at night in Beli Manastir, Baranja's main town.

"It is not organised," Mr. Heyvaert said in an interview. "I do not believe that they (the local Serb authorities) are involved with the people who are doing

this."

Mr. Heyvaert and other U.N. officials said a far more serious problem was looming on the economic front, with Serbs as well as minority Croats, ethnic Hungarians and Gypsies all facing the threat of food shortages and deprivation.

About 20,000 non-Serbs, mainly Croats, among a population of 50,000 were driven from Baranja or fled during the Croatian war. Some 17,000 Serbs, refugees from Croatia or the war in Bosnia, have moved into their homes.

"My feeling in general is what we're facing now is economic

cleansing and not ethnic cleansing," said U.N. Civil Affairs Officer Philip Corwin.

"They (non-Serbs) want to get out because first of all the economic situation is so bad — no money, no jobs, no prospects and no heat in their houses."

Mr. Corwin and other officials say Croatia, which has vowed to regain Serb-held territory by force if the U.N. cannot or will not restore its sovereignty by peacekeeping and mediation, is also to blame for the uncertainty among non-Serbs.

"They are being told by Croatia, media, rumour and hearsay, that there is going to be war and

that the position of Croats is "either you will be mobilised to kill your brother, caught in the crossfire or the Serbs will get you," Mr. Corwin said.

A mobilisation of all men between the ages of 18 and 65 throughout the self-styled Krajina Republic in response to the Croatian offensive has prompted a number of Croats to leave Baranja even though there is no fighting there.

It has also kept the Serbs from working on the land, worsening the economic crisis in the region, Mr. Heyvaert said.

His troops, sent into Croatia as part of a U.N. mission that has failed to achieve its aim of disarming Serb militias, are now spending more and more time helping misery-hit Serbs and non-Serbs to get by.

"We know of a family with nine children, an income of about 10 marks (6) a month and the husband at the front," Mr. Heyvaert said. "We are helping a lot of people here with food, medicine and clothing."

The region's ability to trade, if only to barter the crops and wine that are produced there, is paralysed.

As part of Croatia under international law, Krajina is exempt from the U.N. economic sanctions imposed on what remains of Yugoslavia — the republics of Serbia and Montenegro — over the war in Bosnia.

But Krajina Serb leaders have refused to allow U.N. officials to institute customs and border controls in their enclaves in defiance of a U.N. Security Council resolution.

UNPROFOR says that until they do, it will not issue clearance certificates to local enterprises to trade abroad.

"The result is being strangled," one U.N. official said.

Krajina Serb leaders say U.N. border controls would violate the self-styled republic's "sovereignty."

"They are trying to force us to become so poor that we will think of (rejoining) Croatia," said Milan Milanic, deputy defence minister of the rebel Serb republic.

"They can keep up this blockade for 10 years but we will not change our determination never to live with Croats again."

Congress, Yeltsin lock horns

(Continued from page 1)

nomyrdin, whose appointment was forced on Mr. Yeltsin by the parliament in December, gave Mr. Yeltsin only a half-hearted, partial defence.

He said the president, as the nation's popularly elected leader, "had a right to appeal to the people." Whether Mr. Yeltsin's declaration was unconstitutional or not "is another question," Mr. Chernomyrdin said, without expressing an opinion on the matter.

Mr. Chernomyrdin promised the government would maintain order and try to keep the economy running.

Russia's chief justice and prosecutor general denounced the declaration. But Mr. Yeltsin won immediate backing from some world leaders, including President Bill Clinton.

"As Russia's only democratically elected national leader, he has our support as he reforms government and all reformers throughout the Russian federation," Mr. Clinton said in a statement Saturday.

A summit between Mr. Clinton and Mr. Yeltsin on April 3 and 4 in Vancouver, where substantial aid for Russia is expected to be presented, would go ahead as planned.

But Mr. Clinton said Mr. Yeltsin must sustain his commitment to democracy if he is to keep the support of the U.S.

Both the 250-member Supreme Soviet and its parent body, the 1,033-member Congress of People's Deputies, have opposed Mr. Yeltsin's economic reforms and sought to curb his powers.

Mr. Yeltsin went on nationwide television Saturday to respond to his humiliating defeat earlier this month by the congress, the nation's highest legisla-

ture in Russia's internal affairs.

"The official positions of a number of states which are traditionally considered democratic but which supported president Yeltsin's anti-constitutional actions cause surprise and regret," a draft parliamentary resolution said.

"Such statements are nothing but crude interference in the internal affairs of Russia."

The resolution did not mention any countries by name. But the United States, Germany and France are among those which have expressed strong support for Mr. Yeltsin in the power struggle.

Germany accused Russia's parliament of undermining democracy.

Swedish Prime Minister Carl Bildt said he regretted Mr. Yeltsin's imposition of emergency rule, but added if the gamble works, it could boost democracy in the long run.

"What we are most interested in is to see that the process of reform is being secured," said Hans van den Broek, the European Community's foreign affairs commissioner.

"Our feeling is that President Yeltsin at present is the only leading figure that can put this process through," he said.

Many suggested that Mr. Yeltsin has the moral high ground in the duel, with his mandate as Russia's first democratically-elected leader.

In Brussels, NATO refused to comment on Mr. Yeltsin's decision, but alliance sources said the crisis would be discussed at a meeting of ambassadors Monday.

Canada's Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, who will host Mr. Yeltsin's summit with Mr. Clinton, expressed his support for the decision to let Russia's people choose their own future. He was reassured Mr. Yeltsin intended to safeguard civil liberties and main-

tain continuity in Russia's foreign policy, he said.

France, renewing a call for an emergency summit of the Group of Seven top industrial nations to review aid to Russia, said Mr. Yeltsin's move fell within the framework of democratic reform.

Germany saw Mr. Yeltsin's action as a chance to preserve economic and political reforms, government spokesman Dieter Vogel said.

Britain, Italy, the Netherlands, Austria and Denmark also pledged their support, but Italy added a note of caution.

"The government hopes that the decisions taken by President Yeltsin do not lead to an increase in the serious institutional and political difficulties which Russia faces," Italy's foreign minister said in a statement.

Bulgaria, Moscow's closest ally during the communist era, also spoke out for the Russian president.

"Yeltsin's decree is aiming to avert the chaos and lawlessness Russia is going towards," a spokesman for President Zhelyu Zhelev told Bulgarian radio.

But Mr. Gorbachev poured scorn on the move in an outspoken interview with Italy's La Stampa newspaper.

"They are mad, it's not possible. I can't believe it," said Mr. Gorbachev, who initiated far-reaching reforms that led to the breakup of the Soviet empire and the creation of the successor Commonwealth of Independent States.

Gorbachev's former ally Shevardnadze voiced support for Mr. Yeltsin, but said the Russian leader should have acted sooner and that he felt Russia could be heading for civil war.

"More than that," he told reporters in the Georgian capital Tbilisi, "I can almost smell it."

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CONSOLIDATED MARKET TRADING ACTIVITY FOR THE PERIOD (20/03/1993 - 21/03/1993)					
WEEKLY REPORT					
COMPANY'S NAME	TRADING VOLUME	CLOSING PRICE	PREV. PRICE	OPENING PRICE	CLOSING PRICE
ARMAS BANK	30				
ARMAS BANK	36,590	132.000	131.750	132.000	132.000
JORDAN NATIONAL BANK	78,748	4.810	4.810	4.810	4.810
GLIND ARMAS BANK	10,405	26.500	26.500	26.500	26.500
BANK OF JORDAN	9,516	22.550	22.550	22.550	22.550
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT BANK	64,753	3.190	3.190	3.190	3.190
THE HOUSING BANK	53,965	3.840	3.860	3.820	3.820
JORDAN EXCHANG BANK	41,704	3.860	3.860	3.820	3.820
JAMAS JORDAN INVESTMENT BANK	13,753	5.400	5.400	5.400	5.400
JORDAN TELECOM BANK	73,264	4.730	4.740	4.730	4.730
WILSON BANK FOR SAVING & INVESTMENT	13,817	4.150	4.150	4.150	4.150
BUTIKHAS BANK	29,423	3.680	3.680	3.680	3.680
JORDAN DEVELOPMENT & FINANCE BANK	21,109	6.000	6.000	6.000	6.000
BEIT HANE BALUWAT INVESTMENT FOR HOUSING	21,885	4.000	3.950	3.950	3.950
JAMAS JORDAN INVESTMENT BANK	78,461	1.760	1.760	1.790	1.790
ARMAS BANKING CORPORATION/JORDAN	2,861	3.770	3.720	3.720	3.720
ARMASIAN SEAS INSURANCE	16,780	2.800	2.800	2.800	2.800
JORDAN INSURANCE	190,507	3.940	4.000	4.070	4.070
JOINT ASIA & MIDDLE EAST INSURANCE	11,490	5.180	5.280	5.280	5.280
JORDANIAN ELECTRIC POWER	579,299	1.810	1.900	1.900	1.900
JORDAN ELECTRICITY CORPORATION	5,742	1.050	1.050	1.070	1.070
JORDANIAN POWER CORPORATION	1,825	6.300	6.050	6.050	6.050
JORDAN NATIONAL TELEPHONE LINES	5,322	2.550	2.550	2.550	2.550
NATIONAL PORTFOLIO SECURITIES	159,448	6.720	6.750	6.750	6.750
REAL ESTATE INVESTMENT	18,123	1.680	1.670	1.680	1.680
JORDAN GROUP REAL ESTATE INVESTMENT	19,898	0.810	0.810	0.810	0.810
REAL ESTATE SERVICES & SERVICES LENDING	14,438	1.140	1.140	1.140	1.140
MACHINERY DEPOT, REPAIRING & MAINTENANCE	10,701	1.430	1.430	1.470	1.470
JOINT INVESTMENT BANK & COMMERCIAL TRAVEL	2,200	1.210	1.210	1.210	1.210
ANTICORRUPT CORP. NATIONAL MANUFACTURING	4,448	2.800	1.120	2.800	2.800
THE JORDAN CREDIT FINANCIAL	77,548	1.870	1.850	1.850	1.850
JORDAN FINANCIAL INVESTMENT	83,308	5.940	5.950	5.950	5.950
WOLFE INVESTMENT	6,748	2.050	2.050	2.050	2.050
THE INDUSTRIAL COMPANY & AGRICULTURAL	20,827	6.100	6.100	6.100	6.100
THE JORDAN HORTICULTURE MILLS	15,063	9.800	9.800	9.700	9.700
JORDAN INVESTMENT MANUFACTURING	50,293	7.870	7.870	7.870	7.870
JORDAN CEMENT INDUSTRIES	22,113	6.200	6.250	6.400	6.400
JORDAN DAIRY	5,982	2.620	2.620	2.640	2.640
THE JORDAN PAPER MANUFACTURING	23,243	3.800	3.870	3.850	3.850
JORDAN PAPER & COMMERCIAL PACKAGING	9,458	4.050	4.050	4.050	4.050
THE PUBLIC RECORD	1,723	2.200	2.350	2.350	2.350
ARMAS CHEMICAL INDUSTRIES INDUSTRIES	64,728	23.250	23.250	23.250	23.250
ARMAS CHEMICALS	56,572	3.220	3.280	3.280	3.280
BAPTA INDUSTRIES	7,360	3.680	3.680	3.680	3.680
JORDAN GLASS INDUSTRIES	15,255	0.760	0.760	0.770	0.770
DAR AL GASS DEVELOPMENT & INVESTMENT	273,382	11.900	11.250	11.250	11.250
ARMAS INVESTMENT & MANUFACTURING	89,181	2.440	2.440	2.440	2.440
ARMAS ALKALINE INDUSTRIES	365,499	13.310	13.990	14.100	14.100
LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	78,093	0.970	0.970	0.920	0.920
ARMAS INVESTMENT & TRADING	6,412	7.780	7.780	7.780	7.780
JORDAN MEDICAL CORPORATION	7,481				

PARALLEL MARKET TRADING ACTIVITY FOR THE PERIOD (20/03/1993 - 21/03/1993)

MONTHLY REPORT

COMPANY'S NAME: ALCAN

TRADING VOLUME	PREP. CLOSING PRICE	OPENING PRICE	CLOSING PRICE
35,237	2.728	2.720	2.670
41,707	1.760	1.750	1.740
3,683	2.800	2.750	2.800
GRAND TOTAL	*263,675		

Currency	12/3/1993 Close	1/3/1993 Close	Percent Change
Sterling Pound ^o	1.4324	1.4900	4.02%
Deutsche Mark	1.6650	1.6359	1.78%
Swiss Franc	1.5200	1.5085	0.76%
French Franc	5.6580	5.5690	1.60%
Japanese Yen	118.07	116.00	1.78%

Currency	12/3/1993		1/3/1993	
	1-Month (%)	1-Year (%)	1-Month (%)	1-Year (%)
U.S. Dollar	3.00	3.47	3.00	3.43
Sterling Pound	5.88	5.50	6.06	5.78
Deutsche Mark	8.18	6.68	8.18	6.70
Swiss Franc	4.87	4.25	4.93	4.31
French Franc	11.50	8.75	12.37	8.75
Japanese Yen	3.37	3.06	3.46	3.12

Central Bank of Jordan Exchange Rate Bulletin		
	Date: 21/3/1993	
Currency	Bid	Offer
U.S. Dollar	0.6880	0.6900
Sterling Pound	1.0244	1.0295
Deutsche Mark	0.4201	0.4222
Swiss Franc	0.4550	0.4573
French Franc	0.1232	0.1238
Japanese Yen ^a	0.5921	0.5951
Dutch Guilder	0.3738	0.3757
Swedish Krona	0.0893	0.0897
Italian Lira ^a	0.0436	0.0438
Belgian Franc	0.02040	0.02050

MOSCOW (R) — President Boris Yeltsin promised sweeping changes to unblock his economic reform programme when he announced that he was assuming "special rule" in Russia before an April vote on a new government system.

Mr. Yeltsin, stepping into the unknown with his latest move in a power struggle against the conservative legislature, pledged that reform would move swiftly now that he had written a death warrant for the Congress of People's Deputies.

The battle for control of Russia has paralysed normal government as each side countermends the other's instructions, accusing its rivals of breaking the constitution and the law.

Mr. Yeltsin said in his television address Saturday that he had ordered Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin to list priority economic measures within two days.

Rapid land privatisation would be top of the reform list, he said. The current law allows partial private ownership but restricts sales and transfers of property.

Mr. Yeltsin promised that a massive industrial privatisation programme, in which every citizen was given a voucher worth 10,000 roubles last year to invest in state sell-offs, would be extended to sales of state-owned land.

"I am drawing up a decree regulating the procedure for obtaining ownership of real estate," he said.

He said the government would bring the inflation rate, which hit 2,500 per cent last year and is now hovering at 30 per cent a month, under control.

He pledged to manage "the struggle against inflation, the stabilisation of the rouble market rate and strict control over money supply."

A central plank of reforms envisaged last year by Mr. Yeltsin's reformist government was tight monetary control. But the central bank, which answers to

Museveni prepares to force privatisation bill

KAMPALA (R) — President Yoweri Museveni is putting pressure on Uganda's parliament to accept the sale of public enterprises — the most contentious element of the country's five-year economic reform plan.

Government sources said the main item on the agenda of a closed parliamentary session convened by the president is the World Bank-funded privatisation programme which lawmakers two years ago voted to halt.

such as a brewery and a soft drinks bottler have brought in only 4.6 billion Uganda shillings (about \$4.5 million) according to official sources.

They argued that valuable state assets were being pawned as fast as possible at rock-bottom prices but Mr. Museveni is determined to press ahead with sales of everything from a mail processing plant to Uganda Airlines.

For the government, the support of parliament for the six-month-old privatisation programme — part of a \$91 million project to revitalise the loss-making, state-owned enterprises — is critical to streamlining the

A main complaint is that the give-away prices are being snapped up by foreigners.

Many Ugandans cheered when former president Idi Amin expelled 70,000 Asians who formed the backbone of the business community in 1972.

Under pressure from Western donors who provide the country with \$800 million of aid yearly, Mr. Museveni has made every effort to encourage the Asians to return to this east African coun-

country's economy, analysts say.

The passing of a privatisation bill now in its seventh draft is a condition for the release of a World Bank credit of almost \$66 million to restructure some of the public enterprises before they are put on the market.

Economists believe this injection of capital would help stem the steady drain from treasury coffers which results from keeping afloat more than one hundred public enterprises, many of which

try.

The government can now boast signs of economic recovery — among them an annual inflation rate down from more than 200 per cent at the end of the 1980s to less than 50 per cent.

But the suspension of the privatisation process is a sign there is a political price attached to the sales, analysts said.

In the absence of a stock exchange, the government is unable to float the enterprises which are

are at most only marginally viable.
So far selloffs of enterprises

legally state-owned and so enable
to broader section of Ugandans
to participate in the privatisation.

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TODAY

parliament rather than the government, persisted in handing out easy loans.

Government leaders have accused the bank and parliament of sabotaging the reforms with an inflationary policy. Mr. Yeltsin's determined words seemed to indicate he was poised to take the central bank under his control.

number is expected to soar after the legislature passes a law allowing inefficient state firms to go bankrupt.

But Mr. Yeltsin said: "Employment guarantees for those working at state enterprises which go bankrupt should be enhanced."

He said tens of millions of

Mr. Yeltsin, glancing uneasily from side to side as he spoke, outlined a costly programme of social protection measures aimed at appeasing a population whose living standards have been forced sharply down by post-Soviet reform.

He said credits and tax holidays would be offered to those who wished to start their own businesses. Programmes would be launched to soak up unemployment, a side-effect of last year's move towards streamlining state enterprises.

About one million people are now out of work from a total population of 150 million. The

people, whose deposits in savings banks have been made worthless by inflation, would receive compensation in the non-inflationary form of shares in enterprises, land, and other state property.

He called for new controls on cronyism in local government, warning officials against giving lucrative contracts to favoured firms, and he urged closer coordination between regions of the far-flung federal state.

"Then we will have a real chance to give more help to pensioners, families with many children, single mothers, to all those who now live in poverty and need support," he said.

KARACHI (R) — Pakistan is unlikely to achieve its \$8 billion target for export earnings in the fiscal year that ends in June, officials and exporters have said.

Officials declined to give figures, but experts' forecast Pakistan would fall short of that goal by at least \$1 billion.

They blamed lower cotton production because of devastating floods last September, recession in the cotton yarn industry and falling prices of rice on the international market.

Statistics figures show.

"We are trying hard to raise exports," said EPP Chairman Abdul Aziz Haji Yaqoob. He said Pakistan had revised its ambitious goal but declined to give details.

Exports usually rise in the fourth quarter, he added.

Exports have slumped, mainly because of a shortfall of 170-kilogramme bales of cotton this crop year compared with 1991/92. Cotton and cotton-based products account for more than 60

"Our exports are likely to fetch \$7 billion in the current year, about \$1 billion less than the export target of \$8 billion," said cotton yarn exporter Mahboob Hussain.

It will be difficult to achieve the \$8 billion export target because of the cotton crisis, said an official of the government's Export Promotion Bureau (EPB).

Although the trade deficit in the first eight months of the fiscal year that ends in June narrowed to \$1.79 billion — from \$1.99

per cent of total exports.

The All Pakistan Textile Mills Association (APTMA) demanded recently that Pakistan devalue its rupee to 30 to the dollar — from the current 26.65 — to make Pakistan more competitive after neighbouring India made its rupee more flexible.

Cotton ginners say production fell to 8.76 million bales to March 1, compared with 11.78 million a year ago.

The fall sent domestic cotton prices soaring and resulted in

Exports rose 10 per cent to \$4.49 billion in the July-February period, from \$4.08 billion in the year ago period and imports jumped to \$6.29 billion from \$6.08 billion, Federal Bureau of

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NICOSIA (R) — Iran has begun a new year in which major reforms to shake up an inefficient, war-ravaged economy are expected. Officials are likely to put prices up and people out of work.

Most officials and critics agree that immediate hardships like higher inflation and job losses would result from the measures, centred around currency reforms which amount to a sharp devaluation of the riyal for many sectors.

But President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, in his last Friday prayer sermon of the old year, said: "If we don't cure this illness, our nation will never reach economic independence." The new Iranian year 1372 started Satur-

closed at 1,610 per dollar last week, up from an all-time low of 1,650 three weeks ago.

While few oppose the reforms in principle, industrialists have complained that many companies simply do not have the money to pay for imported machinery and materials at new prices.

Officials say industries made lazy by the cheap dollars fed them for years now need a prod to shape up and catch up with international standards of efficiency.

Heavy Industry Minister Mohammad Hadi Nejad-Hosseini said the reforms would put an end to "subsidy-driven managers and those who thrived on the difference in the

Iran's economy is basically about the state spending the oil revenue — envisaged at \$17 billion this year — above last year's projection — to feed its 60 million people and support a bloated civil service and largely inefficient industries.

During the devastating 1980-88 war with Iraq, the Iranian government kept the rial's official exchange rate at about 70 per dollar to prevent the import-dependent state industries from degenerating into chaos from the exchange rates.

Central bank officials have not fully explained how the new parity was arrived at. Nothing is expected to transpire before business reopens after new year holidays on March 27.

Most analysts expect the bank to try to keep the parity stable by selling dollars on the open market and adjusting the categories eligible to buy hard cash from banks — rather than freely floating the rial and risking it taking a nosedive.

The talk is that they will run out

But the rial's value on the open market, reflecting the decline of the economy under the impact of the war and turmoil of the 1979 Islamic revolution, slid to about 1,400 per dollar.

The wide gap complicated Iran's economic problems.

"A nation which wants to sell its... main (oil) revenue at one-twentieth of its value can obviously never be formed," Mr. Rafsanjani said. "This would mean that the rial would be worthless."

Under this year's budget law the government would abolish the official rate except for defence expenditures and imports of basic foods, fuels and medicine totalling \$3.8 billion.

Another rate of 600 riyal per dollar for some imports would also be scrapped, leaving only the floating rate last set by the central bank at 1,542 riyals per dollar Thursday.

But the move to the open market

IMF presses controversial plan to help Russia

to help Russia

The controversial plan, which involves a world-wide issue of the IMF's artificial currency, the SDR, would make the funds available to Russia without costing the United States and its rich allies anything from their

"This is sort of magic," one monetary source said. "But it warrants serious consideration." The IMF, as policeman of the global monetary system, is, with the permission of its member nations, create money virtually out of thin air — the same way that countries do when they issue currency.

It has not done so since 1981, largely because of opposition from the Soviet and East European governments. The Bush and Reagan administrations on the grounds that such a move would reignite global inflation.

But the urgent need to prop up Boris Yeltsin in his power struggle with Russia's parliament means that such a plan may now stand a chance of being approved, according to the

Russia from the World Bank.

Unlike the IMF, the World Bank can target its assistance on those industries and people in Russia who need it most — and thus hopefully foster support there for further economic reform, the sources said.

The pace of World Bank lending to Russia has been slower than expected, in part because of

President Bill Clinton is pressing to put together domestic and international support for Russia in time for his April 3-4 summit with beleaguered Russian leader Boris Yeltsin.

But the White House has

admitted that Mr. Clinton might have difficulty convincing Congress to spend scarce U.S. resources to help Russia at a time when Americans are being asked to tighten their belts.

The heafty of the IMF proposal is that he would not have to work about that. By issuing SDRs to the 177 member nations, the IMF would generate the \$500 million to the project in the Tumen area of Siberia while the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development will contribute \$133 million. The balance

Jordan Times
Tel: 667171

U.S. drops individual aid packs in Bosnia to prevent fighting for food

SARAJEVO (R) — U.S. planes flew aid to a stranded Bosnian town early Sunday, scattering individual packets rather than bundles to try to prevent starving inhabitants from killing each other in the fight for food.

A U.N. spokesman in Sarajevo said the food was dropped on the Muslim town of Srebrenica, cut off by the Serbs for 11 months. People there are reported to be close to starvation.

He said the new method sought to defuse the dangerous situation on the ground as people swarmed over airdropped food packets and fought each other for the contents.

U.N. officials in the town reported that several people were killed scrambling for the food, or by cartons falling on them.

The U.S. European Command in Frankfurt said test drops had shown that the new rationing, falling slowly because of air pockets in the packaging, would not kill people on the ground and could be dropped directly over towns rather than nearby.

The U.N. succeeded Friday in getting a convoy of food and medicine to Srebrenica in eastern Bosnia, and it evacuated 700 inhabitants including some 100 wounded to the Muslim stronghold of Tuzla.

However, a second aid convoy for Srebrenica was blocked on the Serbian-Bosnia border after local

Serbs said the 18 Danish trucks could proceed only if they unloaded their supplies.

U.N. officials said this appeared to be another delaying tactic to press Serb demands for the evacuation of Serbs from Tuzla, in northern Bosnia.

A spokeswoman for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said they could not accept any linkage between the supply of aid to besieged settlements and the evacuation of Serbs from Muslim areas.

"Our priority at present is to get another aid convoy to Srebrenica," spokeswoman Lyndall Sachs said.

She said the question of evacuating Serbs from Tuzla was being discussed separately.

"If people are willing to go, if there is no force used, and it's done in an orderly fashion, we are all for it," she said.

She said there was no accurate figure of the number of Serbs in Tuzla. Belgrade-based Tanjug News Agency has reported there are 18,000 Serbs in the town of whom 4,000 wanted to leave.

Ms. Sachs said a "very small number" of Serbs had asked the UNHCR office in Tuzla about the possibility of getting out.

Tanjung quoted a refugee from Tuzla Sunday as saying the Muslim authorities in the town were not allowing anyone to leave. The

only way out was through prisoner exchanges, it said.

The refugee was quoted as saying he had heard that town's authorities were mobilising Serbs and sending them to the frontlines to fight in the Bosnian government army.

The besieged Bosnian capital Sarajevo came under heavy artillery attack Sunday after two days of relative calm.

Serb artillery unleashed a ferocious barrage on the old town area and the picturesque residential neighbourhood of Vratnik at dawn, leaving a trail of blasted masonry, shattered glass and downed trolley-bus wires.

Meanwhile negotiations on peace talks to end the bloody war in Bosnia-Herzegovina reached an impasse Saturday with mediators evaluating how or whether to keep the negotiations going.

"There doesn't seem to be any momentum building in the talks at this time," said Fred Eckhard, spokesman for mediators Cyrus Vance and Lord David Owen.

He said Mr. Vance, a former U.S. secretary of state representing the United Nations, and Lord Owen, a former British foreign secretary representing the European Community, were evaluating "to see where they go from here."

The mediators would attempt

to keep the process alive but there was "almost no encouraging sign that it is going to lead somewhere," Mr. Eckhard said.

No progress was made in Saturday's negotiations with Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic and Bosnia's Muslim President Alija Izetbegovic has refused to participate in any formal talks as long as the siege of the east Bosnia town of Srebrenica continues.

On Saturday a U.N. convoy, after more than a week of haggling, evacuated 700 civilians from Srebrenica to the Muslim stronghold of Tuzla in the north of the former Yugoslav republic.

In an effort to put more pressure on Bosnia's Serbs and encourage the Muslims, the Security Council Monday intends to adopt a resolution enforcing an air ban over Bosnia, providing all member governments over the weekend approve a draft text.

Last-minute amendments allow those nations fielding fighter planes against offending aircraft to decide in cooperation with the United Nations how quickly after the resolution was adopted they would be ready to enforce the no-fly zone.

Mr. Karadzic told reporters that "if the no-fly zone is enforced by a resolution, that's not going to help us with our people and that's not going to help us with this conference."



Two Bosnian soldiers and a U.N. soldier carry away a Bosnian wounded woman upon her arrival in Tuzla. She was part of some 100 wounded and 500 women and children who were evacuated from Srebrenica (AFP photo)

IRA causes carnage after recent U.K. police successes

LONDON (R) — Two IRA bombs which caused carnage in a crowded shopping mall in northern England Saturday were a reprisal attack for police successes against the guerrillas, security sources said.

They said the Irish Republic Army, fighting to oust Britain from northern Ireland, was on the ropes after a spate of arrests and police seizures of explosives and guns.

Security forces familiar with IRA strategy had braced for a calculated "spectacular" explosion intended to win publicity and

to show that IRA fighters were still a force to be reckoned with.

"This was a deliberate attempt to murder people simply in order to shock," Home Secretary Kenneth Clarke said after the twin blasts killed a four-year-old boy and injured 56 people in the town of Warrington.

"This is a statement of defiance to say the arrests have made absolutely no difference to them," said former Deputy Police Chief Constable John Stalker.

The IRA has generally avoided the widespread bloodshed caused

by its 1970s bombings on the British mainland, preferring economic, military and government targets and issuing warnings to clear the area.

Saturday's attack on a "soft target" was the most devastating since a massive bomb killed three people and injured 80 last April in London's city financial district.

Chief Stalker said it was meant to show that Warrington, where three men were arrested after a police officer was wounded and a gasworks was bombed on Feb. 26, was still vulnerable.

El Salvador deputies pass amnesty for war criminals

SAN SALVADOR (R) — El Salvador's right-wing parties Saturday forced through a controversial amnesty for army and rebel chiefs accused by a U.N. commission of human rights atrocities during 12 years of civil war.

The ruling Arena Party and its allies in the legislature pushed the amnesty law with a simple majority after failing to win cross-party support.

The vote came just five days after the United Nations appointed "Truth Commission" report blamed the army for the vast majority of war crimes in a

conflict that killed 75,000 people, most of them civilians.

"This is an amnesty that, instead of unifying the country, will divide it even more," opposition leader Ruben Zamora told Reuters.

Hundreds of protesters earlier Saturday had forced the legislative session to be suspended for three hours as they shouted down Arena deputies and screamed for justice.

Colonel Guillermo Benavides and Lieutenant Yushy Mendoza,

who are both serving 30 years in prison for the slaying of six Jesuit priests in 1989, will now be released under the amnesty.

The amnesty prevents the trial of other military leaders, including Defence Minister General Rene Emilio Ponce, who was cited by the Truth Commission for ordering the Jesuit murders.

Rebel and opposition leaders had demanded President Alfredo Cristiani and the assembly first act on the recommendations of the Truth Commission before passing an amnesty.

Kidnappers free last hostages held at embassy in Costa Rica

SAN JOSE, Costa Rica (R) — Kidnappers who stormed the Nicaraguan embassy freed the last of their 25 hostages unharmed early Sunday in return for a ransom and safe passage.

The remaining 10 hostages were released after the kidnappers and Nicaraguan government negotiators agreed on an unspecified ransom and safe passage out of Costa Rica, said Costa Rican Minister of Public Security Luis Fishman.

"We are extremely satisfied that all of the hostages were liberated without bloodshed," Mr. Fishman said after the release at 1 a.m. (2 a.m. est).

The heavily armed kidnappers seized the embassy in downtown San Jose on March 8, making demands which included the removal of Nicaraguan Defence Minister Humberto Ortega.

The gunmen's leader, Jose Manuel Urbina Lara, was

granted political asylum in the Dominican Republic, said Alfonso Arias, Dominican Republic Ambassador to Costa Rica.

Three other unidentified gunmen will be flown by Costa Rican government helicopter to an unnamed point inside Nicaraguan territory later Sunday, an official said.

The gunmen had remained masked throughout the siege, according to hostages released earlier.

The kidnappers will remain in the embassy under the protection of the Costa Rican government until Sunday afternoon when they will be taken to their respective destinations, Mr. Fishman said.

Among the hostages held through the 12-day ordeal was Nicaraguan Ambassador Alfonso Robelo.

The full terms of the agreement to end the kidnapping were not immediately known. Nicaraguan

Interior Minister Alfredo Mendizola said throughout the siege that the kidnappers' political demands, including the removal of Mr. Ortega, were not negotiable.

Their leader, Jose Manuel Urbina Lara, is believed to be a former member of the contra rebels who fought against the leftist Sandinista government during Nicaragua's eight-year civil war.

Mr. Urbina, in one of many communiques issued during the crisis, said the aim of the raid was partly to pressure Nicaraguan President Violeta Chamorro to rid the government of leftist Sandinistas. Mrs. Chamorro defeated the Sandinistas in 1990 elections, but has left many in key government posts.

He also has demanded a \$6 million ransom, but said most of it would be given to the Catholic Church in Nicaragua.

The hostages released earlier said they have been well-treated.

Koreas could resume dialogue soon — Seoul

SEOUL (R) — Cold war foes North and South Korea could renew talks next month on a nuclear dispute, a senior Seoul official said Sunday.

Talks between the two Koreas on proposed mutual nuclear inspections broke down in January when the North protested against Seoul's plan to hold military exercises with Washington.

"Inter-Korean dialogue will pick up swiftly at the end of the North Korea's major political schedules such as the Supreme People's Assembly (parliament) session opening on April 7 and North Korean leader Kim's 11-Sung's birthday celebration on April 5," Gong Ro-Myung, Seoul's chief negotiator in talks with the North on nuclear issues, said in a television interview.

"The government keeps in mind the option of resuming the joint (South-North) Nuclear Control Committee at a proper time to resolve the North's nuclear problem," Mr. Gong told the Korea Broadcasting System.

Pyeongyang fuelled tensions this month when it said it was pulling out of a global treaty on nuclear proliferation rather than allow inspection of military sites.

South Korea and its Western allies have been trying to persuade the Communist North Korea's hardline leadership to reconsider.

Mr. Gong said he believed the North's decision to reject the nuclear non-proliferation treaty (NPT) was designed to "maximize its political negotiating power."

Referring to North Korea's demand that the annual Team Spirit U.S.-South Korean military exercises be scrapped for good, Mr. Gong said: "As long as we are guaranteed a transparent look into North Korea's nuclear programme, there is a peaceful solution at hand." He did not elaborate.

This year's Team Spirit war games, involving more than 120,000 troops from South Korea and the United States, formally ended last Thursday.

The North denounced the war games as a rehearsal for an invasion. Seoul and Washington say they are purely defensive.

The Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which suspects North Korea is on the brink of producing a nuclear weapon, has given Pyongyang until the end of the month to allow its inspectors to check two sites for uranium.

If it misses the deadline, the hard-pressed Communist country could face international economic sanctions.

Mr. Gong said China has been cooperating with the IAEA to make the divided Korean peninsula nuclear-free.

"The North will be struck hard and may wither to death if the U.N. Security Council imposes economic sanctions with China's cooperation," Mr. Gong said.

China, which sent troops to help North Korea during the 1950-53 Korean War, is Pyongyang's last remaining Communist ally and has a veto power in the Security Council.

South Korean officials have said China was likely to play a key mediating role in defusing tension between Pyongyang's leadership and the United States.

WORLD NEWS IN BRIEF

Angolan oil town intact — eyewitness

LUANDA (R) — Angola's UNITA rebels said the northern Angolan oil town of Soyo was in flames but a Reuters correspondent who flew over the town said it was not burning. Correspondent Robert Powell said Soyo's oil installations were intact and he did not see flames when he flew over the town. The UNITA radio station earlier said Soyo was in flames due to bombing by government forces and shelling by UNITA rebels. The town and its outskirts were under heavy shelling, said the National Union for the Total Independence (UNITA) radio, monitored by the British Broadcasting Corporation. "No oil will flow from Soyo to finance the war because everything is in flames as a result of heavy bombing by the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA)'s air force and navy, as well as shelling by UNITA's heavy artillery," the radio said.

Rome prelate in corruption probe

ROME (R) — Italy's corruption scandal touched the Roman Catholic Church for the first time when a prelate and senior charity worker admitted publicly Saturday that he was under inquiry. Monsignor Luigi Di Liegro, head of the Rome Diocesan Office of the Caritas charity organisation, said he faced a probe over accusations of attempting to defraud the Rome municipality and ill-treatment of immigrants. A notification of investigation was issued last December but had not previously been made public. Mr. Di Liegro himself announced he faced the inquiry. The prelate said the probe centred on allegations he had used his contacts in Rome's city hall to secure a contract for a Catholic foundation to temporarily house Somali immigrants in a Rome hotel. He said the ill-treatment allegations arose after the lights and water were cut while the refugees were in the hotel.

6 explosions rocks Philippine volcano

LEGAZPI, Philippines (R) — Mayon Volcano in the Philippines exploded six times Sunday, blasting superhot ash columns towering six-and-a-half kilometres into the air, as lava and molten rock swept down the mountain. Relief officials urged thousands of people who trickled back into villages at the foot of Mayon to flee for their lives and another wave of refugees was expected to jam into evacuation centres where more than 45,000 people are now living. No casualties have been reported since Mayon, near Legazpi city 330 kilometres southeast of Manila, erupted again Saturday. More than 70 people died in a series of eruptions last month from the 2,421-metre (7,940-foot) mountain.

U.S. envoy leaves Haiti

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (R) — A U.S. State Department envoy left Haiti after pledging that the Clinton administration would try to help resolve Haiti's 18-month-old political and economic crisis as soon as possible. Envoy Lawrence Pezzullo refused to comment on his meetings with leaders of Haiti's army and its military backed government. "Our conversations have to remain in the strictest confidence... it serves everybody's purpose to do so," Mr. Pezzullo told reporters before departing after a two-day visit to the impoverished Caribbean nation. Mr. Pezzullo, a former ambassador to Nicaragua, said that no timetable had been set for the restoration of democracy in Haiti, but added that he was "hopeful" that progress would soon be made. Mr. Pezzullo was accompanied to Haiti by Charles Redman, a former State Department spokesman who was named special charge d'affaires to Haiti last week.

Snowstorms kill 15 in China

PEKING (AP) — Fifteen people in remote northwestern China have died in storms that have dumped snow on the third of Qinghai province in the past two and a half months, an official report said Sunday. More than 2,000 people have been injured and 476,000 heads of livestock have perished in nine heavy snowfalls in the pastoral area, the Xinhua News Agency reported. In most of the affected area, temperature remained at minus 30 degrees Celsius (minus 22 degrees Fahrenheit), threatening 120,000 residents and seven million heads of livestock. Relief teams were trying to bring grain, feed and gasoline to the stricken areas, but were being hampered by the snow, poor transportation and scattered population. The Xinhua report said 14 people died from flu, dysentery and pneumonia, and a nine-year-old boy froze to death when he tried to round up livestock in the snow.

Bombay leader vows crackdown

BOMBAY (R) — The chief minister of India's western state of Maharashtra has vowed to crack down ruthlessly on criminal gangs believed to be responsible for bomb attacks in Bombay. "I will see that they are mercilessly and ruthlessly dealt with, the process has already started," Sharad Pawar said in an interview published Sunday. He said that while local groups had planted the bombs, India still has to track down those outside the country who financed the operation and provided plastic explosives normally unavailable in India. The former defence minister took on administration of the Indian state after Hindu-Muslim riots in December and January. Pawar told India's Sunday Observer newspaper that the bombings which killed 250 people wounded 1,200 wounded on March 12 were designed to exploit religious riots in India and sabotage the economy. "Some forces were eager to send a message outside India that Bombay is burning. Bombay is insecure, Bombay, the financial capital, is not in good shape, so why should anyone invest in India..." he was quoted as saying.

Ukrainian minister to explain START delay

KIEV (R) — Foreign Minister Anatoly Zlenko goes to Washington this week to explain to the new U.S. administration why Ukraine has persistently delayed ratification of a nuclear disarmament accord.

Mr. Zlenko is certain to face tough questioning about why Ukraine's parliament has launched into lengthy hearings on the START-I treaty nearly three years after it first said the country would become non-nuclear.

There is no indication when a ratification debate will take place. A growing number of deputies appear opposed to approving START and joining the 1968 non-proliferation treaty (NPT).

"At the moment everything is being done to carry out our declared policy," Mr. Zlenko told a weekend news conference. "We are working on trying to keep a minimum the negative consequences of becoming a non-nuclear state."

Ukraine's leaders initially promised START-I, signed in 1991, would be ratified by the end of last year. The United States has expressed concern at the delay, particularly as ratification is needed in order to proceed with the more ambitious START-2 treaty concluded with Russia in January.

President Leonid Kravchuk and government ministers have demanded that other nuclear states provide Ukraine with security guarantees for giving up the 176 strategic missiles of the former Soviet arsenal still on its territory.

Guarantees in one form or another have been received from the United States, Britain and Russia.

2 killed, 7 wounded in Burmese rebel attacks

MAE SOT, Thailand (Agencies) — Burmese guerrillas killed two people and wounded seven in attacks during the past week, it was reported Sunday.

A Burmese trader told reporters his convoy from Rangoon was stopped by a gun battle between government troops and ethnic Karen rebels near the Burmese town of Kawkaik Friday.

He saw one dead soldier and three who were wounded, he said.

Burmese official radio reported Sunday that one civilian was killed and four were wounded last weekend when six members of the guerrilla Karen National Union (KNU), attacked a lorry and a car in two separate incidents.

This attack was also near Kawkaik, which is about 200 kilometres east of Rangoon and just 30 kilometres from the Thai border.

"The KNU terrorist insurgents cannot stand seeing private entrepreneurs enjoying the freedom of trade and transport so they are attacking private cars and planting mines on railroad lines and roads," the radio said.

The KNU is the strongest of a

dozen ethnic minority rebel groups that have been fighting the Rangoon government since Burma gained independence from Britain more than four decades ago.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh said Sunday Burmese infiltrators attacked local villagers, killing one man and wounding five.

The attack Friday night at Naikhyangchhari in southeast Bangladesh was the first such incident since December 1991 when Burmese border guards, called Luthins, attacked a Bangladesh security post, killing two soldiers.

Police and villagers initially blamed border guards for the latest attack but a military commander later said separatists fighting for independence from Rangoon for Muslim-majority Arakan state could equally have been responsible.

"We don't know for certain if the attack was launched by Luthins or guerrillas of the Rohingya Solidarity Organisation (RSO)," the military commander of southeastern Bangladesh Major-General Azizur Rahman told Reuters.

Burma has often accused Bang-

ladesh of sheltering rebels from the RSO and Arakan Rohingya Islamic Front. Bangladesh denies the charge.

Villagers told police nearly 20 men entered Naikhyangchhari, seized some villagers and asked them to show the way to the nearest camp of the Bangladesh Rifles paramilitary border force.

"As they refused the Luthins killed one man. Five others were wounded by indiscriminate gunfire," one police officer told reporters.

Naikhyangchhari, a rugged hill and forest area near the border, houses one of 19 camps for Burmese refugees from alleged military persecution in Arakan state.

Officials said some 288,000 refugees have come to Bangladesh. A total of 22,345 refugees have returned to their homes since repatriation began in September under an agreement signed between Dhaka and Rangoon four months earlier.

A newspaper report Saturday said over 100 Rohingyas had returned to Bangladesh over the previous four or five days and some of them took shelter in the Naikhyangchhari camp.

"They told camp officials that one foreign relief organisation encouraged them to come back," the Ittefaq newspaper said without giving details.

A camp official, who refused to be identified, confirmed the report.

In a separate development, a member of a self-styled Burmese exile government has been assassinated, a statement from the opposition group said Saturday.

The National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma said Win Ko, the group's finance minister, had been assassinated after undertaking a mission last November to northern Burma.

It suggested that Burma's military government was responsible for the killing, and appealed to the international community "to help find the murderers for

The coalition government is headquartered in Manipal, about 200 kilometres northeast of the Burmese capital of Rangoon on the border with Thailand. It has limited but growing recognition from the international community as Rangoon's military regime continues to be ostracised for human rights abuses.

COLUMN

Fergie divorce settlement put at £2 million

LONDON (R) — Prince Andrew's estranged wife the Duchess of York stands to collect almost £2 million (\$2.97 million) for herself and her children if she and the duke divorce, the Mail On Sunday newspaper said. There was no-one available at Buckingham Palace to comment on the claims in the Mail On Sunday that the divorce settlement between Queen Elizabeth's second son and the duchess, known as "Fergie" after her maiden name Ferguson, had been finalised. Under its terms, according to the paper, the duchess would receive a £500,000 (\$743,300) personal settlement from the royal family. A further £1.4 million (\$2.08 million) would be put into a trust for the couple's two daughters, Princesses Beatrice and Eugenie, including £600,000 (\$891,900) to buy a house which they would own. The duke and duchess announced they were separating in March last year but there has been no official confirmation that they are to divorce. According to the paper, the duchess, who was said to have been hoping for £4 million (\$5.95 million) for herself as well as money for her daughters, was "stunned" by the modest size of the settlement.

Pakistan bans tight Western dress in Pashtu films

ISLAMABAD (R) — Pakistan's Central Board of Film Censors Saturday banned actresses in Pashtu language films from wearing figure-hugging Western dresses. "Skin-tight" Western dress, particularly jeans and skirts, is objectionable and does not conform with Pashtun culture, the board said in a letter to makers of films in Pashtu, the language of North West Frontier Province. "It is high time that no leniency be shown toward such dress," the board said, adding that, unless filmmakers obeyed its ruling, scenes from their films would be cut from June 1. Pashtu is not understood in much of the rest of Islamic Pakistan, but Pashtu films featuring risqué scenes with heroines in tight or revealing clothes are popular.

Fallen climber found near older skeleton in Alps

GRENOBLE, France (R) — Rescuers looking for a climber who had fallen to her death in the French Alps found a skeleton next to her body, police said Saturday. They said the skeleton was that of a man who went missing a year ago and probably fell off the same cliff, near Saint-Gervais.

Thai technology minister relies on low-tech amulet

BANGKOK (R) — Thailand's Minister of Science and Technology says he is protected from danger by the magnetic field in an amulet that can even deflect bullets, the Sunday Bangkok Post reported. Minister of Science, Technology and the Environment Phisan Moonlarsartathorn told reporters bullets missed his head by just one centimetre (half an inch) when he was shot at years ago. "The magnetic field deflected the bullets and made the shots harmless," said Mr. Phisan. The Post quoted Mr. Phisan, who is also senior adviser to the Buddha image club of Thailand, as saying the amulet had an "invisible power", which he called "natural science". "I would not be here talking with you now as a minister unless I had worn this little amulet," he was quoted as saying.

Animal lovers strip to save fur

PARIS (R) — Five animal lovers paraded naked through a Paris fur fair Saturday to proclaim the right of animals to keep their skins on. The group's spokesman, American Dan Matthews, said the three men and two women wielded a "we'd rather be naked than wear fur" banner through cafes and into the fair an hour before police moved in. The group of French and U.S. activists were bundled naked into a police van, charged with indecent exposure and released after four hours. "Police were quite nice and supportive," said Mr. Matthews. People For Ethical Treatment of Animals group had staged similar protests in the United States, Japan and Canada but had never been arrested before. They planned to take their protest to a fur fair in Milan Wednesday, he added.